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MILTON'S SHORTER POEMS

HOMER

HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH CLASSICS

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MILTON'S SHORTER POEMS

EDITED BY

FRED LEROY HOMER, A.M.

Teacher of English in the Pittsburgh Central High School

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PREFACE

The aim of this edition of Milton's *Shorter Poems* is, primarily, to supply the pupil, by means of notes and questions, the necessary information and stimulus for the understanding of the poems studied. No attempt has been made to produce a learned book. There is already an abundance of such editions of Milton; and the present editor does not believe that the apparatus of the scholar is necessary or even desirable for the high school pupil. Consequently there are few references to other authors, and the necessary explanations are made as brief as possible. That the pupil may be helped as much as possible, the notes are put at the bottom of the page where they will be immediately available; and many questions are inserted to stimulate thought and enable the student to work out the meaning for himself.

The teacher has also been kept in mind. The questions at the bottom of the page, primarily for the pupil, will suggest many other questions to bring out the meaning of the text; the questions at the back of the book will suggest ways of bringing out the larger aspects of the poems as to form and subject matter; while the outlines will serve both teacher and pupil as a convenient framework for study of the relations of the different parts of each poem.

The editor assumes that the teacher will be familiar with other editions of these poems. Huntington's (Ginn & Co.), Neilson's (Scott, Foresman & Co.), and Trent's (Longman, Green & Co.) editions are especially useful and have been referred to freely in preparing this edition. One suggestion has been taken from Parrott and Long's "English Poems from Chaucer to Kipling." Of the complete editions of Milton's English poems, Masson's, the so-called standard, is too conjectural in its notes to be trusted. Browne's (Clarendon Press Series) is perhaps as satisfactory as any other.

MILTON'S LIFE

There are two good reasons why a person should wish to know something about the life of an author whose works are being studied. The first reason is the natural curiosity which one feels concerning the life of a man who has done something remarkable. The second, is the increased understanding and appreciation of an author's works which may be gained by a knowledge of the circumstances of his life. We can understand the tales of Hawthorne better when we learn about his strange, abnormal boyhood in Puritan New England; and we can appreciate "Huckleberry Finn" better for knowing that Mark Twain spent his early life near the Mississippi River. In other words, the lives of both these men are reflected in their writings. So the life of Milton influenced his works and for this reason a short sketch of his life may help to a better appreciation of his poetry. Only the main facts of his life, the things that affected his writings, will be touched upon in this brief account.

Milton's life naturally divides itself into three periods, early, middle, and later life. The first was a period of growth and retired leisure; the second, of active public life; the third, of forced and rather unhappy retirement. And his literary life may also be divided into the same three periods: the early period of his shorter poems, the middle period of his prose, and the later period of his longer poems. We shall study his life and works in each of these three periods.

Early Life and Early Poems (1608-1640)

LIFE

First of all, we should remember that Milton's early life was spent in a great city. He was born in Bread Street, London, December 9, 1608, and spent practically all of his time in the city until he was sixteen years of age. Shakespeare was still living in London during Milton's childhood and Milton may have seen the great dramatist. Recent investigations have shown that Shakespeare probably went past Milton's home on his way to and from the Globe Theater. This is interesting, but it is more important to note that Milton was not, like Shakespeare, a country-bred boy; that he did not, as Shakespeare did, grow up among country sights and sounds and birds and flowers. Consequently Milton never learned these things as intimately as Shakespeare did. He seems to have learned about nature first from books rather than from observation and this may account

for a certain flavor of *bookishness* which critics have found in Milton's treatment of nature.

In the second place, Milton's parents were well-to-do Puritans. His father was what was then called a scrivener, that is, a professional writer of legal documents, somewhat like our notary public. He was a well educated man, especially fond of music and a considerable musician. This love of music and the musical atmosphere of the home may partly account for John Milton's becoming a poet. It certainly accounts for his becoming an accomplished musician.

Being fairly wealthy, Milton's parents were able to give him the best possible education. He had tutors at home and was prepared for college at the famous St. Paul's School. Since the family was Puritan, Milton naturally went to Cambridge University, which has always been, in a general way, the university of the so-called middle class, as Oxford has been the university of the nobility. (It is worth noting that of the greater English poets, only two, Arnold and Shelley, have attended Oxford. Spenser, Ben Jonson, Marlowe, Milton, Dryden, Gray, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron and Tennyson have all been Cambridge men.) Milton entered Christ's College in 1625 and remained until 1632, taking both the A.B. and the A.M. degrees. At college he was distinguished for his handsome personal appearance, his purity of life, and his brilliant scholarship. He had already determined to become a great poet and strove to fit himself for his vocation. By the time Milton left college his father had retired from business and had settled on a country estate at Horton, a village about twelve miles west of London. Milton now went to Horton and for six years devoted himself to further study, interrupted occasionally by the writing of poems. To complete his education he started on a tour of the continent in 1638. He went through France and Italy, as far as Naples. Everywhere he was cordially received by the famous and learned men of the time. One of the great men he visited was the famous Galileo. But while abroad, Milton heard rumors of trouble at home between the king and parliament and he decided to return home at once, since, as he says, "I thought it base to be travelling at my ease for intellectual culture, while my countrymen at home were fighting for liberty." By August, 1639, he was back in London.

EARLY WORKS

Milton's first important work was written while he was still at Cambridge. This was the "Hymn on the Morning of Christ's Nativity," one of the greatest Christmas poems in the English language. While at Horton, Milton wrote his four best-known shorter poems, L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, Comus, and Lycidas. The first two are supposed to have been written about the year 1632; Comus was acted in the fall of 1634; and Lycidas appeared in 1637. Since these four poems are discussed in this book it is not necessary to say anything more about them at present.

Middle Life and Prose Works (1640-1660)

LIFE

In order to understand the middle period of Milton's life it is necessary to have a clear idea of the political and religious conditions in England at this time. Charles I had come to the throne in 1625 and by 1640 he had become intensely disliked and distrusted by a large number of his subjects. His harsh enforcement of the laws requiring religious uniformity, and the cruelty of Laud, archibishop of Canterbury, alienated the Puritans and drove many of them to New England and others, later, into rebellion. The king's arbitrary political rule, his attempt to collect unconstitutional taxes, aroused the opposition of those who loved liberty and cared for a free government. In general, these lovers of political liberty were also Puritans desirous of religious liberty. The two causes of dissatisfaction united the Parliament against the king and in 1642 Civil War broke out. The king was finally defeated by the Parliamentary forces under Oliver Cromwell, was tried for treason and finally, in 1649, beheaded. A republic, called the Commonwealth, was established. This later became a sort of monarchy with Cromwell as ruler with the title of Lord Protector. Finally, after the death of Cromwell, Charles II, the exiled son of Charles I, became king in 1660. This is known as "The Restoration" *i.e.,* the restoration of the old line of kings.

With his return from abroad, a new phase of Milton's life began. Hitherto, supported by his father, he had lived the quiet, happy life of a secluded poet. He now plunged into the active, tempestuous, increasingly public life of a man of affairs. He settled in London and began tutoring private pupils; became interested in teaching and wrote a famous Tractate on Education; married a woman who presently left him, wrote several articles in favor of divorce

and was later reconciled with his wife; gradually took a more prominent part in the discussion of public questions, defended the execution of Charles I, and was finally, in 1649, appointed "Secretary of Foreign Tongues" under the new Commonwealth. It was his duty to carry on the correspondence between the English government and foreign governments and he was also a sort of official defender of the Commonwealth. In his latter capacity he wrote his famous *Pro Populo Anglicano Defensio* in reply to Salmasius, a Dutch scholar who had condemned the execution of Charles I. Milton's "Defense of the English People" brought him great fame throughout Europe as a debater, but it cost him his eyesight. He had been warned that continued use of his eyes in reading and writing would mean blindness, but his devotion to the cause of liberty was so great that he took the risk and in 1652 became totally blind. So when Milton writes in L'Allegro,

> "And in thy *right* hand lead with Thee,
> The mountain nymph, *sweet* Liberty,"

we may be sure that he really feels the respect for liberty which his words imply. Though blind, Milton retained his public office during the life of Cromwell.

WORKS

During this period of busy public and private life, Milton found little time for poetry. He did, indeed, write an occasional sonnet, the most famous of all of these being, the one "On His Blindness." But most of his writing during these troublous years was prose, both in English and in Latin. Greatest of all these prose works was his "Areopagitica, or a Speech for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing." This was written in English and was addressed to the English Parliament. The title was suggested by the Areopagus, or Mars Hill, in Athens, where entire freedom of speech was allowed (see Acts 17..16-21). It is one of the noblest pleas in the language for what we now call "the freedom of the press."

Later Life and Longer Poems (1660-1674)

LIFE

With the Restoration, Milton's life was again greatly changed. Since he had defended the execution of Charles I, he was naturally in disfavor with the government of Charles II. For a time his life was in danger but it was finally spared and he was allowed to live in retirement, comparatively poor and almost completely ignored by people of power and influence. Gradually the feeling of hostility

towards him relaxed somewhat and with his increasing reputation as a poet he was occasionally visited by distinguished men, so that his last years were a little happier. He died November 8, 1674 and was buried in St. Giles' Church, London, where his tomb may still be seen.

WORKS

In spite of his blindness, Milton was able, during these years of forced retirement, to carry out the dream of his youth and write a great epic poem. Paradise Lost was begun before the Restoration. It was finished in 1665 and the first edition appeared in 1667. For this first edition of 1,300 copies Milton received £5, for a second edition another £5, and his widow accepted £8 in discharge of all further claims. *Paradise Lost,* perhaps the greatest epic poem in the language, tells the story of the "fall of man," that is, the temptation of Adam and Eve, their yielding to the temptation, and their consequent expulsion from the Garden of Eden. In 1670 Milton published *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes,* his two last poems. The first of these is an epic poem telling the story of the Temptation of Jesus in the Wilderness; the *Agonistes* is a tragedy imitating classical Greek dramas in form and presenting the last day in the life of the Biblical hero, Samson. Milton, blind, disgraced, practically a captive in the hands of his enemies, probably felt himself another Samson fighting an apparently hopeless battle, so we can readily see why the subject appealed to him.

We have noted the chief facts concerning Milton's life and works. In conclusion let us recall two characteristics of the great man and great poet: One is his unselfish devotion to the cause of liberty; the other his life-long, though interrupted, devotion to his vocation of poet, a devotion that inspired long and careful preparation for his great work. A careful study of his works will reveal abundant evidences of both these characteristics.

L'ALLEGRO AND IL PENSEROSO

[L'Allegro and Il Penseroso are companion poems and should be read and studied together. They represent two types of character, or, more probably, two moods of the same character, that is, of Milton himself.

The titles are Italian words meaning respectively "The Cheerful (Man)" and "The Thoughtful (Man)." "The Social Man" and "The Solitary Man" are titles which fairly well describe the two characters. It must not be supposed that the "thoughtful" or "pensive" man is "melancholy" in the sense of "gloomy." He *enjoys* solitude, as the social man enjoys society. Indeed, the two poems might well have been called, "The Pleasures of Society" and "The Pleasures of Solitude."

Note that the first ten lines of each poem, differing in form from the remainder, are much alike in structure and phrasing. This similarity in the introductions is only one of the many similarities and contrasts in the two poems. They begin with the first lines and end with the last ones. Find them. The outlines in the back of the book will be of assistance in getting a clear idea of the contents of each poem and will also serve to bring out the contrasts. The outlines should be completed.]

L'ALLEGRO.

HENCE, loathèd Melancholy,
Of Cerberus[1] and blackest Midnight born[2]
In Stygian cave forlorn,
'Mongst horrid shapes, and shrieks, and sights unholy![3]
Find out some uncouth[4] cell,
  Where brooding[5] Darkness spreads his jealous wings,
And the night-raven[6] sings;
  There, under ebon shades and low-browed rocks,
As ragged[7] as thy locks
  In dark Cimmerian[8] desert ever dwell.
  But come, thou goddess fair and free,[9]
In heaven ycleped[10] Euphrosyne,

[1] The three-headed dog guarding the entrance to the lower world. His den was on the farther side of the river Styx; hence the "Stygian cave."

[2] What qualities would Melancholy inherit from Cerberus and Midnight?

[3] Note the alliteration. What sound is repeated and why?

[4] Literally "unknown;" hence "dismal, terrifying."

[5] *Brooding* seems to have two meanings: "hovering as a bird," and "meditating gloomily." Of what is Darkness jealous?

[6] Accurately speaking, there is no *night* raven. The raven is not a night bird. But the night-raven was a common bird in literature. Both Spenser and Shakespeare use the term. The raven was a bird of ill omen (cf. Poe's "Raven") and the word *night* was probably used with reference to its black color and with the idea of making it sound more ominous.

[7] Rugged, shaggy.

[8] In the Odyssey the Cimmerians are said to dwell in a land "shrouded" in "mist and cloud" and "deadly night."

[9] "Fair and free" was a conventional phrase applied to beautiful women. The "red as a rose" of the Ancient Mariner is a similar phrase.

[10] Called. From the Anglo-Saxon "clepean," to call. The earliest form of the past participle was "ge-clept." This *ge* prefix is retained in modern German. In English it was changed to i or y and finally dropped entirely in nearly all words.

And by men heart-easing Mirth;
Whom lovely Venus,[1] at a birth,
With two sister Graces[2] more,
To ivy-crownèd Bacchus bore:
Or whether (as some sager sing)[3]
The frolic wind that breathes the spring,
Zephyr, with Aurora playing,
As he met her once a-Maying,[4]
There, on beds of violets blue,
And fresh-blown roses washed in dew,
Filled her with thee, a daughter fair,
So buxom,[5] blithe, and debonair.[6]
Haste thee, Nymph,[7] and bring with thee
Jest, and youthful jollity,
Quips, and cranks, and wanton wiles,[8]

[1] The goddess of love. Bacchus was the god of wine.

[2] The three Graces of classical mythology were Euphrosnye (mirth), Aglaia (brightness), and Thalia (bloom).

[3] There is a change in the construction. The passage seems to mean: "I do not know whether the foregoing genealogy is correct, or whether, as some wiser poets say," etc. Milton himself is probably the "sager" poet referred to. In making Mirth the child of Zephyr (the West Wind) and Aurora (the Dawn) rather than Venus and Bacchus, Milton indicates that the kind of mirth he prefers is the outcome of wholesome, outdoor pleasures rather than of voluptuous revelry.

[4] Gathering flowers, especially the hawthorne or may, to celebrate May Day. The form *a-Maying,* is similar to our *a-fishing.* The *a* is the shortened form of the preposition *on.*

[5] *Buxom* originally meant "yielding, obedient;" then "gay and lively," as it seems to mean here. At present it means "robust and lively."

[6] With a pleasant bearing or manner.(French, *de bon air*).

[7] Why is Mirth called a nymph?

[8] A *quip* is a short, sharp speech; a *crank,* a humorous twist or turn of speech; *wanton wiles* are merry tricks.

Nods and becks[1] and wreathèd smiles,
Such as hang on Hebe's[2] cheek
And love to live in dimple sleek;
Sport that wrinkled Care derides,[3]
And Laughter holding both his sides.[4]
Come, and trip it as you go
On the light fantastic toe;[5]
And in thy right hand lead with thee
The mountain-nymph, sweet Liberty;[6]
And, if I give thee honour due,
Mirth, admit me of thy crew,
To live with her, and live with thee[7]
In unreprovèd[8] pleasures free:—
To hear[9] the lark begin his flight,
And, singing, startle the dull night,
From his watch-tower in the skies,

[1] Bows, beckonings.

[2] The cupbearer of the gods and the embodiment of eternal youth.

[3] What is the grammatical construction of "Sport," of "that" and of "Care"? Does a person full of care deride or laugh at sport?

[4] Don't miss the emphasis on "both."

[5] Ll. 33-34. Notice how these lines skip and dance. Why "*fantastic* toe"?

[6] Ll. 35-36. Note the stately, dignified movement of these verses, in contrast with the tripping of the two preceding. Give a reason. Why is Liberty called a "*mountain*-nymph" and why is she placed on Mirth's right hand?

[7] Who is meant by "her," and who by "thee?"

[8] Irreproachable, blameless.

[9] In the same construction as "to live." Here begins the Social Man's "ideal" round of pleasures. What is the time of day? The lark is the European skylark, quite different from our American meadow lark. The skylark begins to sing as it rises from the ground and continues singing as it mounts in the air, frequently so high as to be invisible though still audible. It is a bird of the fields and does not come about houses. Read Shelley's "Ode to a Skylark."

Till the dappled dawn doth rise;
Then to come, in spite of sorrow,[1]
And at my window bid good-morrow,
Through the sweet-briar or the vine,[2]
Or the twisted eglantine;[3]
While the cock, with lively din,
Scatters the rear of darkness thin,[4]
And to the stack, or the barn-door,
Stoutly struts his dames before;[5]
Oft listening how the hounds and horn
Cheerly rouse the slumbering morn,
From the side of some hoar[6] hill,
Through the high[7] wood echoing shrill;
Sometime walking, not unseen,[8]
By hedgerow elms, on hillocks green,
Right against[9] the eastern gate,

[1] A much discussed passage. The simple and natural meaning seems to be that the Social Man, after hearing the lark, rises and, going to his window, looks out and bids good-morrow to the world *in spite of,* that is, *notwithstanding* any sorrow he may have had previously. Other interpretations are (1) that the *lark* comes to the window (see note on lark); (2) that the Social Man approaches the window from the outside; and (3) that "in spite of" means "in defiance of." What may be said for or against each of these four interpretations?

[2] The *grape* vine is probably meant.

[3] *Eglantine* is another name for the wild-rose or sweet-briar, whose stalk is not twisted. Milton may have meant the honeysuckle.

[4] Darkness seems to be thought of as a retreating army.

[5] Scan lines 51-52. Note the irregularity of the first line and the regular *strutting* movement of the second.

[6] May mean "white with frost" or "gray with mist" or "old." Which?

[7] Probably means "free from underbrush."

[8] Cf. "I walk unseen," Il. Pens., l. 65. Why the difference?

[9] Modifies "walking" and is equivalent to "straight towards."

Where the great sun begins his state,[1]
Robed in flames and amber light,
The clouds in thousand liveries dight;[2]
While the ploughman, near at hand,
Whistles o'er the furrowed land,[3]
And the milkmaid singeth blithe,
And the mower whets his scythe,
And every shepherd tells his tale[4]
Under the hawthorn in the dale.
Straight[5] mine eye hath caught new pleasures,
Whilst the landskip[6] round it measures:
Russet lawns, and fallows gray,[7]
Where the nibbling flocks do stray;
Mountains, on whose barren breast

[1] "Stately progress" or condition of pomp and magnificence.

[2] The clouds are thought of as servants arrayed (dight) in garments *delivered* to them. Note the kind of morning the Social Man enjoys.

[3] Can you vividly imagine or recall these morning sounds? Try it.

[4] This is usually explained as meaning "counts his number" of sheep. Our modern words "bank-teller" and "tally" make clear these old meanings of "tell" and "tale." But "tells his tale" strongly suggests telling a story. In the "Hymn on the Morning of Christ's Nativity" (ll. 85-92) Milton says that the shepherds,

> "Or ere the point of dawn,
> Sat simply chatting in a rustic row."

Again, would English shepherds count their sheep in the morning? Decide which interpretation you think is the right one and be ready to give your reasons.

[5] Straightway. Note the words indicating time in lines 44, 57, 84, 99, 117, 131, 135.

[6] Old form for "landscape." (Cf. friend-*ship*.) What is the grammatical construction of "landskip."

[7] *Lawns*, open hillsides covered with short grass; *fallows*, unsown, ploughed land.

The labouring[1] clouds do often rest;
Meadows trim, with daisies pied,[2]
Shallow brooks, and rivers wide;
Towers and battlements it sees[3]
Bosomed[4] high in tufted trees,
Where perhaps some beauty lies,[5]
The cynosure[6] of neighbouring eyes.
Hard by, a cottage chimney smokes
From betwixt two aged oaks,
Where Corydon and Thyrsis met,[7]
Are at their savoury dinner set
Of herbs and other country messes,
Which the neat-handed Phyllis dresses;
And then in haste her bower she leaves,
With Thestylis to bind the sheaves;
Or, if the earlier season lead,[8]

[1] Parrott and Long define this as "slowly moving;" Trent as "big with rain." Perhaps both ideas are implied but the latter seems suggested by the word "barren" in the preceding line.

[2] Variegated; from magpie, a conspicuously black and white bird.

[3] Windsor Castle is about four miles west of Horton and very probably Milton had it in mind when he wrote this line.

[4] Situated among, showing above.

[5] Dwells, lodges.

[6] Literally "dog's tail," a term applied to the North or Pole Star because it is the end star in what is now regarded as the handle of the Little Dipper (constellation "Ursa Minor"), but was formerly regarded as the tail of a dog (Gr. *kunos;* Latin, *canis*). The old Phoenician sailors steered by the North Star, so the word "cynosure" came to mean "the thing looked at, the center of attraction."

[7] Corydon, Thyrsis, Thestylis, and Phyllis are common names for country people, especially shepherds, in Greek and Latin pastoral poetry. They are here used as general names for country folk.

[8] Notice that it is not an actual twenty-four hours that is being described, but rather an "ideal" round of pleasures.

To the tanned[1] haycock in the mead.
Sometimes, with secure[2] delight,
The upland[3] hamlets will invite,
When the merry bells ring round,
And the jocund rebecks[4] sound
To many a youth and many a maid
Dancing in the checkered shade,[5]
And young and old come[6] forth to play
On a sunshine holiday,
Till the livelong daylight fail:
Then to the spicy nut-brown ale,[7]
With stories told of many a feat:
How fairy Mab[8] the junkets eat;

[1] Turned brown by the sun, "cured," as country folk say.

[2] In the Latin and original English sense of "free from care" (Latin *securus.*)

[3] Probably here means "remote from towns."

[4] The earlier form of the violin.

[5] Can you picture to yourself the "checkered shade?"

[6] We may consider *come* a past participle. "Young and old" would then be in the same construction as "youth" and "maid" in l. 95. Or we may supply another *when* before "young" and consider *come* an indicative.

[7] People used to flavor ale and wine with nutmeg and other spices. *Nut-brown* was a somewhat conventional adjective. Cf. the old ballad, "The Nut-Brown Maid."

[8] Mab is sometimes spoken of as the queen of the fairies. She looked after households, punishing untidy maids by eating their dainties or by pinching and pulling them in their sleep. Shakespeare's description of her, in Romeo and Juliet, I, 4, 53-95, is too long to quote but should be read. *Junkets* were originally a kind of cream cheese which were wrapped in rushes (Italian, *giunco*). Here the word may mean something like "cottage cheese" or simply "dainties" in general.

She was pinched, and pulled, she said,[1]
And he, by friar's lantern[2] led,
Tells how the drudging goblin sweat
To earn his cream-bowl duly set,
When, in one night, ere glimpse of morn,
His shadowy flail hath threshed the corn
That ten day-labourers could not end;
Then lies him down, the lubber fiend,[3]
And, stretched out all the chimney's length
Basks at the fire his hairy strength,
And, crop-full, out of doors he flings,
Ere the first cock his matin rings.[4]
Thus done the tales, to bed they creep,[5]
By whispering winds soon lulled asleep.

[1] The "she" and "he" of this and the next line mean this and that individual in the company who tells of her or his adventures.

[2] Probably refers to the *ignis fatuus*, the misleading light of burning gases popularly known as "Will-o'-the-Wisp" and "Jack-o-Lantern;" or it may possibly refer to the "drudging goblin" of the next line. This "goblin" is Robin Goodfellow, the Puck of Midsummer Night's Dream and of Mr. Kipling's "Puck of Pook's Hill" and "Rewards and Fairies," the most celebrated and according to Mr. Kipling the only surviving, English fairy. One of the men tells how Puck, in payment for the bowl of cream regularly or properly set out for him, threshed more grain (wheat, oats or barley, *not* maize) in one night with his fairy threshing stick than ten men could have done in the same time. He then sleeps on the hearth till dawn, when with a full stomach (cropful) he hastens into hiding. All spirits were supposed to be abroad only between curfew and cockcrow.

[3] Clumsy, awkward; *not* devil.

[4] Literally, "rings the bell for morning service," *i. e.*, crows.

[5] Why are the country people said to *creep* to bed?

Towered cities please us then,[1]
And the busy hum of men,
Where throngs of knights and barons bold,
In weeds[2] of peace, high triumphs[3] hold,
With store of ladies, whose bright eyes
Rain influence,[4] and judge the prize
Of wit or arms, while both contend
To win her[5] grace whom all commend.
There let Hymen[6] oft appear
In saffron robe, with taper clear,

[1] The rest of the poem has been considered by some editors an account of the Social Man's *reading* during the remainder of the evening rather than a recital of actual experiences. This interpretation may be due, first, to the fact that no means are provided for transporting L'Allegro from the country to the town. But as has been pointed out, the author is not re counting the events of any one day but rather a round of "ideal" pleasures suitable to different hours of the day; so the sudden transition to pleasures of the city presents no difficulties. A second reason for thinking that these lines refer to *reading,* is the kind of amusements described. It is agreed that in lines 125-130 Milton is describing the gorgeous masques, such as his own Comus, so popular just at that time; but in lines 119-124 he seems to be describing medieval tournaments and poetical contests such as no longer existed in Milton's time. But may not these lines also refer to masques in which there are *representations* of the medieval contests? The "where" of line 119 and the "there" of line 125 seem to refer to the same place; and lines 131-132 certainly imply that L'Allegro is in the city in person, not merely reading about the city.

[2] Cf. "widow's weeds," *i. e.*, clothes.

[3] Pageants, public festivities or exhibitions.

[4] Used in the original English sense of "power of the stars." The ladies' eyes are thought of as stars.

[5] The queen of the contest. Cf. the tournament in Ivanhoe.

[6] The god of marriage, frequently introduced into masques. In Ben Jonson's "Masque of Hymen" he is represented as dressed in a saffron (yellow) robe and carrying a torch. Shakespeare introduces Hymen in "As You Like It" V, 4.

And pomp, and feast, and revelry,
With mask and antique pageantry;
Such sights as youthful poets dream[1]
On summer eves by haunted stream.
Then to the well-trod stage anon,
If Jonson's learnéd sock be on,[2]
Or sweetest Shakespeare, Fancy's child,
Warble his native wood-notes wild.
And ever,[3] against eating cares,
Lap me in soft Lydian[4] airs,
Married to immortal verse,[5]

[1] Milton himself was just then dreaming such dreams, as is evident from these poems and from Comus. Was Milton a very strict Puritan at this time of his life?

[2] If one of Jonson's learned "classical" comedies is playing ("on the boards") at the theater. The *sock* was the low-heeled shoe worn by the actors of comedy in the ancient Greek and Latin plays. The *buskin* was the corresponding high-heeled shoe worn by actors of tragedy. The words had come to mean "comedy" and "tragedy" respectively. Of course, the actual socks and buskins were not worn in Milton's time. Notice that Jonson's plays are called "learned," while Shakespeare is referred to as a bird warbling "native" wild notes. This suggests the opinion, common in Milton's time, that Jonson, trained in the classics, knew how to write correct, *i. e.,* "classical," plays; while Shakespeare, though possessing great genius, wrote rather crude, irregular "romantic" plays.

[3] What evidence do you find in L'Allegro and Il Penseroso that Milton was fond of music?

[4] The ancients recognized three types of music, Dorian, Phrygian and Lydian. The first was stately and majestic; the second, bright and lively; the third, soft and sweet. The Lydian measure seems to have been used for love songs. Cf. Dryden's "Alexander's Feast."

"Softly sweet, in Lydian measures,
Soon he soothes his soul to pleasures."

[5] The music so suited to the beautiful poetry that words and music seem married. Can you name such songs?

Such as the meeting soul may pierce,[1]
In notes with many a winding bout[2]
Of linkèd[3] sweetness long drawn out,
With wanton heed and giddy cunning,[4]
The melting voice through mazes running,
Untwisting all the chains that tie
The hidden soul of harmony;[5]
That Orpheus'[6] self may heave his head,
From golden slumber on a bed
Of heaped Elysian[7] flowers, and hear
Such strains as would have won the ear
Of Pluto to have quite set free
His half-regained Eurydice.
These delights if thou canst give,
Mirth, with thee I mean to live.[8]

[1] Such as may penetrate the responsive soul. *Pierce* was then pronounced *perse*. It still is so pronounced sometimes, as a proper name.

Compare these lines with the corresponding passage in Il Penseroso (Ll. 155-165.)

Is the music L'Allegro hears vocal or instrumental? Is it secular ("worldly") or religious? [2] Twist or turn.

[3] Why *linked?* What does the whole famous line describe?

[4] Notice the apparent contradiction between the adjectives and the nouns. Which describe the appearance and which the reality?

[5] The soft voice is first said to run through intricate passages (mazes), and then, changing the figure, to release the soul of harmony by untying the chains by which it is bound.

[6] According to classical mythology, the musician Orpheus descended to Hades (Pluto's realm) to regain his lost (dead) wife, Eurydice. He played such sweet music that Pluto consented to release Eurydice on condition that Orpheus would not look at her until he was out of Hades. He looked when nearly out and so lost her. The whole pathetic story is practically told in these lines and in lines 105-109 of Il Penseroso. *That*=so that.

[7] Of Elysium, the classical equivalent of Paradise.

[8] Compare these lines with the closing lines of Il Penseroso. Which of the two, Mirth or Melancholy, does Milton seem to have the greater confidence in?

IL PENSEROSO

HENCE, vain deluding Joys,
The brood of Folly without father bred!
How little you bestead,[1]
Or fill the fixed[2] mind with all your toys![3]
Dwell in some idle brain,
And fancies fond[4] with gaudy shapes possess,[5]
As thick and numberless
As the gay motes that people the sunbeams,
Or likest[6] hovering dreams,
The fickle pensioners[7] of Morpheus'[8] train.
But hail, thou goddess sage and holy,
Hail, divinest Melancholy!
Whose saintly visage is too bright
To hit[9] the sense of human sight,
And therefore to our weaker view[10]
O'erlaid with black, staid Wisdom's hue;
Black, but such as in esteem
Prince Memnon's sister might beseem,[11]
Or that starr'd Ethiop queen[12] that strove

[1] Profit, help. [2] Mind fixed upon serious things; opposed to the "idle brain."

[3] Trifles. [4] Foolish fancies. [5] What is the grammatical subject of "possess?"

[6] Old superlative of *like*. The *shapes* are most like dreams.

[7] Attendants. Queen Elizabeth established a select guard of handsome young men called *pensioners* and the word became common as a term to describe a monarch's retinue. [8] The god of sleep.

[9] Agree with. Compare with our slang phrase, "They didn't *hit it off* well together." [10] Weaker than what?

[11] Though dark-complexioned, Melancholy is still of such beauty as would be fitting for a sister of Memnon, an Ethiopian prince who took part in the Trojan war and whom Ulysses referred to as one of the handsomest of men.

[12] Cassiope, who, with her daughter Andromeda, was placed among the constellations (hence *"starred"*).

To set her beauty's praise above
The Sea-Nymphs, and their powers offended.
Yet thou art higher far descended:[1]
Thee bright-hair'd Vesta[2] long of yore
To solitary Saturn bore;
His daughter she—in Saturn's reign
Such mixture was not held a stain.
Oft in glimmering bowers and glades
He met her, and in secret shades
Of woody Ida's[3] inmost grove,
While yet there was no fear of Jove,
Come, pensive nun, devout and pure,
Sober, steadfast, and demure,[4]
All[5] in a robe of darkest grain,[6]
Flowing with majestic train,
And sable stole of cypress lawn[7]
Over thy decent[8] shoulders drawn.
Come, but keep thy wonted state,
With even step and musing gait,[9]

[1] Melancholy is descended, not from kings and queens, but from gods.

[2] Vesta was the goddess of the hearth and promoter of purity; Saturn, the god of culture and promoter of civilization. The reign of Saturn, before he was overthrown by his son, Jove, was the fabled golden age. According to astrology the influence of Saturn made men melancholy. Milton seems to have in mind both ideas. He invented this parentage for Melancholy, just as he invented the second parentage for Mirth.

[3] A mountain in Crete where Jove was brought up.

[4] Cf. "buxom, blithe, and debonair." [5] Compare our phrase, "*All* dressed up." [6] Color, probably dark purple. [7] Black veil or hood of fine crape linen.

[8] Fittingly beautiful. Goldsmith, in the "Deserted Village," speaks of the "*decent* church."

[9] Compare the way in which Melancholy comes with Mirth's way.

And looks commencing with the skies,
Thy rapt soul sitting in thine eyes:
There, held in holy passion still,
Forget thyself to marble,[1] till
With a sad leaden[2] downward cast
Thou fix them on the earth as fast.
And join with thee calm Peace and Quiet,
Spare Fast, that oft with gods doth diet,[3]
And hears the Muses[4] in a ring
Aye round about Jove's altar sing:
And add to these retirèd Leisure,
That in trim gardens takes his pleasure;
But, first and chiefest, with thee bring
Him that yon[5] soars on golden wing,
Guiding the fiery-wheeled throne,
The Cherub Contemplation;
And the mute Silence hist[6] along,
'Less Philomel will deign a song[7]

[1] Forget her surroundings and become like a marble statue.

[2] "Sad" means "serious" rather than "sorrowful." Does "leaden" refer to color or heaviness? As "fast" as what?

[3] Dine. [4] The goddess of the arts, especially poetry.

[5] Yonder. The reference is to the chariot of God seen in a vision of the prophet Ezekiel (Ezekiel, V.) each wheel of which was a cherub. Milton says, on his own authority, that Contemplation was the chief or guiding cherub. What was the corresponding companion of Mirth? Scan line 54.

[6] "Hist" seems to be a verb meaning "bring silently." Some critics consider it a past participle meaning "hushed," thus making *silence* the object of *bring*.

[7] "Unless the nightingale will consent to sing." Philomela, in Greek mythology, was a princess who was changed into a nightingale to save her from the anger of her husband Tereus, who, however, still pursued her in the form of a hawk. *Philomela* is still the scientific name for the nightingale and *Tereus* for a genus of hawk. The nightingale is represented by the poets as forever sorrowing over her former life.

In her sweetest, saddest plight,[1]
Smoothing the rugged brow of Night,[2]
While Cynthia[3] checks her dragon yoke
Gently o'er the accustomed oak.
Sweet bird, that shunn'st the noise of folly,[4]
Most musical, most melancholy!
Thee, chantress, oft, the woods among,
I woo, to hear thy even-song;
And, missing thee, I walk unseen[5]
On the dry smooth-shaven green,
To behold the wandering moon
Riding near her highest noon,[6]
Like one that had been led astray
Through the heaven's wide pathless way,
And oft, as if her head she bowed,
Stooping through a fleecy cloud.
Oft, on a plat of rising ground,
I hear the far-off curfew[7] sound
Over some wide watered shore[8]

[1] "Plight" seems to be used in the combined sense of "mood" and "strain."

[2] The song of the nightingale causes the stern face of Night to relax into a pleased expression.

[3] One of the names for Diana, the moon goddess. She stops her dragon-drawn chariot to listen to the nightingale's singing in the oak in which L'Allegro was accustomed to hear it. It will do no harm to remember that actually, in the case of the nightingale, as well as of all other birds, it is the *male* and not the *female* that is the singer.

[4] When does the nightingale sing? What is the corresponding bird to which L'Allegro listens?

[5] Compare "not unseen" in L'Allegro, line 57.

[6] Highest point in the sky, where the sun is at noon. Do not miss the marvelous beauty of these lines about the moon.

[7] What is the literal meaning of "curfew?" What is the corresponding morning sound in L'Allegro?

[8] The shore of some wide water.

Swinging slow with sullen roar;[1]
Or, if the air[2] will not permit,
Some still, removèd[3] place will fit,[4]
Where glowing embers through the room
Teach light to counterfeit a gloom;[5]
Far from all resort of mirth,
Save the cricket on the hearth,[6]
Or the bellman's drowsy charm[7]
To bless the doors from nightly harm.
Or let my lamp, at midnight hour,[8]
Be seen in some high lonely tower,[9]

[1] What is it that swings slowly? Read the verse so as to bring out the swinging movement.

[2] Weather. [3] Remote, secluded. [4] Be fitting.

[5] What is meant by teaching "light to counterfeit a gloom?"

[6] In the days when there were open fire-places in loosely-constructed houses, crickets frequently lived about the hearth and could be heard chirping when the house was quiet. What book gets its title from this line? Do you know any other examples of book-titles taken from lines or parts of lines of poetry?

[7] The bellman was a nightwatchman who went about the streets ringing his bell and announcing the hours and the state of the weather. You may recall the story of the nightwatchman in Philadelphia who announced the surrender of Cornwallis. The character of the "drowsy charm" may be seen from Robert Herrick's little poem, "The Bell-man."

> "From noise of Scare-fires rest ye free,
> From murders Benedicite,
> From all mischances that may fright
> Your pleasing slumbers in the night,
> Mercie secure ye all and keep
> The Goblin from ye while ye sleep,
> Past one o'clock and almost two
> My masters all, Good day to you."

[8] Note the indication of time.

[9] Why does Il Penseroso choose a "high lonely tower" as a place in which to read?

Where I may oft outwatch the Bear[1]
With thrice great Hermes,[2] or unsphere[3]
The spirit of Plato, to unfold[4]
What worlds or what vast regions hold
The immortal mind that hath forsook
Her mansion in this fleshly nook;
And of those demons[5] that are found
In fire, air, flood, or underground,
Whose power hath a true consent,[6]
With planet or with element.
Sometime let gorgeous Tragedy,
In sceptred pall,[7] come sweeping by,
Presenting Thebes, or Pelops' line,
Or the tale of Troy divine;[8]

[1] Stay awake reading till morning. The constellation of the Bear (either Ursa Major of Ursa Minor), revolving about the pole star, is visible all night.

[2] With=reading. Hermes Trismegistus, (*i.e.,* "thrice-great") was a mythical Egyptian philosopher to whom were attributed certain works treating of magic, religion, and the nature of the soul.

[3] Call back from the sphere where it dwells. Reading Plato's works is, as it were, calling back his spirit and communing with it.

[4] To tell what worlds or what regions hold the immortal soul of man, when it has left the body.

[5] Some such phrase as "to tell" should be supplied after "and." *Demons* means *spirits,* not devils. Compare *fiend,* L'Allegro, line 110.

[6] Agreement. Certain spirits were supposed to work in harmony with certain "elements" and certain planets. Read "A Doctor of Medicine" in Kipling's *Rewards and Fairies.*

[7] Bearing the scepter and wearing the royal robe. Ancient tragedy dealt with the downfall of princes.

[8] Milton refers to the dramas of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides which deal with the stories of Oedipus, King of Thebes, of Agamemnon and Menelaus, descendants of Pelops, and of the Trojan War.

Or what (though rare) of later age
Ennobled hath the buskined stage.[1]
But, O sad virgin![2] that thy power
Might raise Musæus[3] from his bower;
Such notes as, warbled to the string,
Drew iron tears down Pluto's cheek,
And made hell grant what love did seek;[4]
Or call up him[5] that left half told
The story of Cambuscan bold,
Of Camball, and of Algarsife,
And who had Canace to wife
That owned the virtuous ring and glass,
And of the wondrous horse of brass,
On which the Tartar king did ride;
And if aught else great bards[6] beside
In sage and solemn tunes have sung,

[1] "Or other recent tragedies that are worth while." For "buskined", see L'Allegro, line 132 and note. Milton may be referring here to the tragedies of Shakespeare and Ben Jonson. What does he seem to think of modern tragedy as compard with ancient?

[2] Who is the "sad virgin?" [3] Musæus was a mythical Greek poet to whom sacred hymns were ascribed. "Bower" probably means "secluded retreat."

[4] See L'Allegro, lines 145-150 and note. Musæus and Orpheus evidently stand for "lyric" poetry. What three kinds of verse does Il Penseroso read?

[5] Chaucer, who left unfinished "The Squire's Tale," one of The Canterbury Tales. It is a story of Oriental magic, as Milton suggests. The persons named are characters in the story. The "virtuous" *i.e.*, powerful, ring enabled a person to understand the language of birds; the glass enabled him to see future events; the "wondrous horse" was a sort of classical aeroplane.

[6] The "great bards" are almost certainly Edmund Spenser and the great Italian poets, Tasso and Ariosto. Spenser's "Faerie Queene" exactly fits the description.

Of tourneys, and of trophies hung,
Of forests, and enchantments drear,
Where more is meant than meets the ear.[1]
Thus, Night, oft see me in thy pale career,
Till civil-suited[2] Morn appear,
Not tricked and frounced[3] as she was wont
With the Attic boy[4] to hunt,
But kerchieft[5] in a comely cloud,
While rocking winds are piping loud;
Or ushered with a shower still,
When the gust hath blown his[6] fill,
Ending on the rustling leaves,
With minute[7] drops from off the eaves.
And, when the sun begins to fling
His flaring beams, me, goddess,[8] bring
To archèd walks of twilight groves,
And shadows brown, that Sylvan[9] loves,
Of pine, or monumental[10] oak,
Where the rude axe with heavèd stroke[11]

[1] One thing is *said,* which meets the *ear;* another thing is *meant,* which the *mind* perceives. This is an accurate description of an allegory such as the "The Faerie Queene" or "The Pilgrim's Progress."

[2] Dressed as a civilian or citizen. Compare the appearance of the morning in L'Allegro. Note the indication of time.

[3] In fine clothes and with curled hair. Wont=accustomed.

[4] Cephalus a Grecian youth beloved by the Dawn.

[5] With head covered. Compare "cur-few," *i.e.,* cover the fire; and "chef," a head cook.

[6] The old form of the *neuter* pronoun. *His* is frequently used in this sense in the Bible and in Shakespeare.

[7] As we say "minute guns." [8] Who is the goddess?

[9] Silvanus, an old Italian god of woods and fields, later identified with the Greek god Pan.

[10] Why "monumental" oak.

[11] What is really "heaved" and what really "rude?"

Was never heard the nymphs[1] to daunt
Or fright them from their hallowed haunt.
There, in close covert by some brook,
Where no profaner[2] eye may look,
Hide me from day's garish[3] eye,
While the bee, with honeyed thigh,
That at her flowery work doth sing,
And the waters murmuring,
With such consort[4] as they keep
Entice the dewy-feathered sleep;
And let some strange mysterious dream
Wave at his wings, in airy stream
Of lively portraiture displayed,
Softly on my eyelids laid;[5]
And, as I wake, sweet music breathe
Above, about, or underneath,
Sent by some spirit to mortals good,[6]
Or the unseen genius[7] of the wood.
But let my due[8] feet never fail
To walk the studious[9] cloisters' pale,[10]

[1] The wood spirits or dryads.

[2] Unduly familiar, disrespectful. It is probably used in the sense of *"too* profane," a Latin construction not common in English.

[3] Glaring. [4] Harmony, concert.

[5] A difficult passage to explain literally but clear enough in its general meaning. Il Penseroso wishes to have pleasant dreams while asleep in the forest. He seems to think of a personified dream hovering at the wings of sleep and pouring on his eyes a stream of vivid pictures.

[6] Good or kind to mortals. [7] The guardian spirit.

[8] Feet due at the cloister.

[9] Milton may have had in mind the covered walks at Cambridge rather than the cloister of a cathedral.

[10] Enclosure. Cf. "palings" of a fence.

And[1] love the high embowed[2] roof,
With antique pillars massy proof,[3]
And storied[4] windows richly dight,
Casting a dim religious[5] light;
There let the pealing organ blow
To the full-voiced quire below,
In service high and anthems clear,
As may with sweetness, through mine ear,
Dissolve me into ecstasies,
And bring all heaven before mine eyes.[6]
And may at last my weary age
Find out the peaceful hermitage,
The hairy gown and mossy cell,
Where I may sit and rightly spell[7]
Of[8] every star that heaven doth shew,
And every herb that sips the dew,
Till old experience do attain
To something like prophetic strain.[9]
These pleasures, Melancholy, give,
And I with thee will choose to live.

[1] Supply "let me" before "love." [2] Arched or vaulted.

[3] Proof against the mass or weight. [4] Storied does not mean several stories high. What does it mean?

[5] Why "religious light?" Why do churches contain colored or ground glass windows?

[6] Compare the effect of this religious music upon Il Penseroso with the effect of the secular upon L'Allegro.

[7] Study laboriously. [8] About.

[9] The old physicians believed that there was a connection between the stars and the herbs, the understanding of which gave them extraordinary power. Read Kipling's poem, "Our Fathers of Old," in *Rewards and Fairies.*

COMUS

A MASK

PRESENTED AT LUDLOW CASTLE, 1634,

BEFORE

JOHN, EARL OF BRIDGEWATER,

THEN PRESIDENT OF WALES.

THE PERSONS

THE ATTENDANT SPIRIT, *afterwards in the habit of Thyrsis.*

COMUS, *with his crew.*

THE LADY.

FIRST BROTHER.

SECOND BROTHER.

SABRINA, *the Nymph.*

COMUS

[THE MASQUE

In order to understand and appreciate "Comus," it is necessary to know something about the general form of the drama known as the masque, of which Milton's poem is the most famous example in the English language.

The masque is a kind of dramatic performance that had been growing up in England for a long time but which reached its highest development between 1600 and 1642. Masques were very popular during these years among the nobility and the wealthy trade unions or guilds, and at the court of James I, and Charles I; and some of the greatest men of the time contributed to their production. Ben Jonson wrote many masques which were presented at court. Inigo Jones, a famous architect, constructed the scenery and the stage machinery; Henry Lawes, a distinguished musician, composed the music; and even Francis Bacon himself superintended their production.

These plays were often enormously expensive. Ben Jonson's "Masque of Blackness," in 1609, cost the court £3,000, about the equivalent of $60,000 at the present time; and Shirley's "Triumph of Peace" in 1634, the very year Comus was played, cost the Inns of Court the enormous sum of $400,000. It has been estimated that the average cost of a masque was about $25,000.

From these figures we may readily infer one fact concerning the masque: it was not a regular play presented at a public theater. In fact, we may fairly describe masques as elaborate private or semi-private theatricals presented at court, at the homes of the nobility, and at the halls of the trades unions or guilds. This form of the drama had certain well marked characteristics which it is worth while to note so that they may be recognized in Comus, which is a typical masque except that in it the words, or text, are of much greater relative importance than in most masques.

1. Masques were presented with very elaborate stage properties, costumes, scenery, machines, etc., such as were seldom seen in regular plays. The occasion was some important festivity, such as a wedding, an inauguration into office, or a national holiday.

2. Some of the actors were usually members of the nobility or of the society giving the masque.

3. Complimentary references to these actors or to other distinguished persons present, were common.

4. Dancing was a prominent feature. Generally there were two kinds of dances, courtly and rustic. The courtly

dances were probably taken part in by members of the audience; the rustic dances were sometimes performed by professional actors and were known as the anti-masques.

5. The singing of songs was another prominent characteristic.

6. The characters represented were frequently mythological or supernatural beings, or nursery characters such as Old King Cole.

These are some of the marked characteristics of the masque. All of them are to be found in *Comus* and should be noted by the student.

MILTON'S COMUS

Now as to Milton's famous masque! On Michaelmas Day, September 29, 1634, the Earl of Bridgewater was inaugurated Lord President of Wales, at Ludlow Castle, Shropshire. In the evening *Comus,* which had been composed for the occasion, was presented in the great hall of the castle. Milton had written the words; Henry Lawes, the music. The parts of the Lady and the Two Brothers were taken by the Earl's daughter Alice and his sons, John and Thomas. It is not known who played the parts of Comus and Sabrina; they were probably taken by professional actors.

SOURCES OF COMUS

It is much more important to study a piece of literature itself than to learn its "sources," *i.e.,* the earlier works from which the author received suggestions. At the same time it may be interesting to observe that many great authors do not originate their plots but draw them from other writers. Shakespeare is a notable example of this practice. In *Comus,* Milton has done this: he has taken from other men hints, characters and incidents, and woven them into a great original poem.

There is a tradition that the Earl of Bridgewater's children were actually lost in the woods near Ludlow Castle and that the plot of *Comus* was based on this incident; but there is no proof that such an adventure ever happened. On the other hand, critics are generally agreed that Milton received his suggestions from George Peele's play, "The Old Wives' Tale," John Fletcher's pastoral play, "The Faithful Shepherdess," a play of "Comus" by a Dutchman named Putaneus, Ben Jonson's masque, "Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue," and the Circe myth as told by classical authors. Most of these "sources" may be read by those who wish to determine the extent of Milton's indebtedness to other authors. But it is much more important to make a careful study of *Comus* itself.]

COMUS

The first Scene discovers a wild wood. The Attendant Spirit descends or enters.

BEFORE the starry threshold of Jove's court
My mansion is, where those[1] immortal shapes
Of bright aërial spirits live insphered[2]
In regions mild of calm and sérene air,
Above the smoke and stir of this dim spot,
Which men call earth, and,[3] with low-thoughted care,
Confined and pestered[4] in this pinfold[5] here,
Strive to keep up a frail and feverish being,
Unmindful of the crown that virtue gives,
After this mortal change, to her true servants,
Amongst the enthronèd gods on sainted seats.[6]
Yet some there be that, by due steps, aspire
To lay their just hands on that golden key
That opes the palace of eternity.
To such my errand; and but for such
I would not soil these pure ambrosial weeds[7]
With the rank vapours of this sin-worn mould.[8]

[1] Those well-known beings, the gods.

[2] May refer to the "spheres" of the Ptolemaic astronomy but probably simply means "enclosed in," "surrounded by."

[3] Supply "where they" before "with."

[4] "Hampered" rather than "annoyed."

[5] A pound for animals, originally; here it means a narrow enclosure or *pen*.

[6] Note the beauty of this line.

[7] Heavenly garments. [8] Earth.

But to my task. Neptune, besides the sway
Of every salt flood and each ebbing stream,
Took in by lot, 'twixt high and nether Jove,[1]
Imperial rule of all the sea-girt isles
That, like to rich and various gems, inlay
The unadornèd bosom of the deep;
Which he, to grace[2] his tributary gods,
By course[3] commits to several government,
And gives them leave to wear their sapphire crowns,
And wield their little tridents.[4] But this Isle,[5]
The greatest and the best of all the main,
He quarters[6] to his blue-haired[7] deities;
And all this tract that fronts the falling sun,[8]
A noble peer, of mickle[9] trust and power,
Has in his charge, with tempered[10] awe to guide
An old and haughty nation,[11] proud in arms:
Where his fair offspring, nursed in princely lore,
Are coming to attend their father's state,[12]
And new-entrusted sceptre. But their way
Lies through the perplexed paths of this drear wood,
The nodding horror of whose shady brows[13]
Threats the forlorn and wandering passenger;

[1] Jupiter and Pluto. [2] Honor. [3] In order.

[4] The trident was Neptune's scepter. [5] What isle?

[6] Probably means "divides among."

[7] From the color of the sea. Deities probably means the same as the "tributary gods" above.

[8] What is the western part of Great Britain called?

[9] Great. Who is meant?

[10] "Mixed, modified." The *awe* is due to *justice* mingled with *mercy*.

[11] Who are meant? Why *old?* What characteristic of the masque is shown in these references?

[12] Refers to the inauguration. [13] Refers to the overhanging branches.

And here their tender age might suffer peril,
But that, by quick command from sovereign Jove,
I was despatched for their defense and guard.
And listen why; for I will tell you now
What never yet was heard in tale or song,
From old or modern bard, in hall or bower.[1]
Bacchus, that first from out the purple grape
Crushed the sweet poison of misusèd wine,
After the Tuscan mariners transformed,[2]
Coasting the Tyrrhene[3] shore, as the winds listed,[4]
On Circe's island[5] fell. (Who knows not Circe,
The daughter of the Sun, whose charmèd cup
Whoever tasted, lost his upright shape,
And downward fell into a grovelling swine?)
This nymph, that gazed upon his clustering locks
With ivy berries wreathed,[6] and his blithe youth,
Had by him, ere he parted thence, a son
Much like his father, but his mother more,
Whom, therefore, she brought up, and Comus named:
Who, ripe and frolic of his full-grown age,[7]
Roving the Celtic and Iberian fields,[8]
At last betakes him to this ominous wood,[9]
And, in thick shelter of black shades embowered,
Excels his mother at her mighty art,
Offering, to every weary traveller,

[1] Banquet hall or lady's chamber, *i.e.*, anywhere, among men or women.

[2] Had been transformed. A Latin construction. Bacchus transformed into swine some sailors who had seized him.

[3] Western coast of Italy. [4] "Pleased" or "willed." Cf. "The wind bloweth where it listeth." [5] Aeaea, off the coast of Italy. [6] Cf. "ivy crowned Bacchus," L'Allegro, line 16.

[7] Rejoicing in his prime. [8] France and Spain.

[9] What wood is meant?

His orient[1] liquor in a crystal glass,
To quench the drought of Phœbus;[2] which as they taste
(For most do taste, through fond[3] intemperate thirst)
Soon as the potion works, their human countenance,
The express[4] resemblance of the gods, is changed
Into some brutish form of wolf, or bear,
Or ounce,[5] or tiger, hog, or bearded goat,
All other parts remaining as they were;[6]
And they, so perfect in their misery,
Not once perceive their foul disfigurement,
But boast themselves more comely than before,
And all their friends and native home forget,
To roll with pleasure in a sensual sty.
Therefore, when any favoured of high Jove
Chances to pass through this adventurous glade,
Swift as the sparkle of a glancing star
I shoot from heaven to give him safe convoy,
As now I do. But first I must put off
These my sky-robes, spun out of Iris'[7] woof,
And take the weeds and likeness of a swain[8]
That to the service of this house belongs,
Who, with his soft pipe[9] and smooth-dittied[10] song,
Well knows to still the wild winds when they roar,

[1] "Orient" suggests the East with its strange beauty and its mystery.

[2] Thirst caused by the sun. [3] Cf. "fancies fond," Il Penseroso, line 6.

[4] Exact. [5] A carnivorous, leopard-like animal.

[6] In the Odyssey the men's bodies are changed wholly into those of swine, but their minds remain unchanged. Why does Milton change only their faces but make them unconscious of the change? What does drinking the liquor of Comus symbolize?

[7] Goddess of the rainbow. [8] Countrymen. Who is referred to in these lines? Is the description a fitting one?

[9] A flute-like instrument. [10] Pleasantly worded.

And hush the waving woods; nor of less faith,[1]
And in this office of his mountain watch
Likeliest, and nearest to the present aid
Of this occasion. But I hear the tread
Of hateful steps; I must be viewless now.

COMUS *enters with a charming-rod in one hand, his glass in the other; with him a rout of monsters,*[2] *headed like sundry sorts of wild beasts, but otherwise like men and women, their apparel glistering.*[3] *They come in, making a riotous and unruly noise, with torches in their hands.*

Comus. The star[4] that bids the shepherd fold,
Now the top of heaven doth hold;
And the gilded car of day
His glowing axle doth allay[5]
In the steep Atlantic stream;[6]
And the slope sun his upward beam
Shoots against the dusky pole,[7]
Pacing toward the other goal
Of his chamber in the east.
Meanwhile, welcome joy and feast,
Midnight shout and revelry,
Tipsy dance and jollity.
Braid your locks with rosy twine,[8]
Dropping odours, dropping wine.[9]

[1] Not less faithful as a watchman than skilled as a musician.

[2] Unnatural creatures.

[3] Note the form. Cf. "All that *glisters* is not gold."

[4] Hesperus, the evening star. [5] Cool.

[6] The ancients regarded the Atlantic as an earth-encircling stream which the sun traversed in passing from west to east.

[7] This is a rather obscure passage about which the commentators disagree. What do you make of it?

[8] Wreaths or garlands of roses.

[9] What lines in L'Allegro are suggested by lines 102-106?

Rigour now is gone to bed,
And Advice, with scrupulous head,
Strict Age, and sour Severity,
With their grave saws,[1] in slumber lie.
We, that are of purer fire,[2]
Imitate the starry quire,[3]
Who, in their nightly watchful spheres,
Lead in swift round the months and years.
The sounds[4] and seas, with all their finny drove,
Now to the moon in wavering morrice[5] move;
And, on the tawny sands and shelves,
Trip the pert fairies and the dapper elves.[6]
By dimpled brook and fountain-brim,
The wood-nymphs, decked with daisies trim,
Their merry wakes[7] and pastimes keep:
What hath night to do with sleep?
Night hath better sweets to prove,
Venus now wakes, and wakens Love.
Come, let us our rites begin;
'Tis only daylight that makes sin,[8]
Which these dun shades will ne'er report.

[1] Maxims, proverbs. [2] Fire, of which the gods were made, was supposed to be the purest of the four elements.

[3] "We imitate the starry spirits by dancing as they do while they lead on the months and years." The starry quire is suggested by the old belief in the "music of the spheres," the harmonious sound made by the moving spheres.

[4] Cf. Puget *Sound.* [5] A morris or Moorish dance. What phenomenon is referred to?

[6] "Dance the lively fairies and the dainty elves." Note how the movement of the line and the sound of the words all harmonize with our idea of fairies. [7] "Vigils, watches."

[8] A whole philosophy of life is expressed in this line. Is it Milton's or Comus's philosophy?

Hail, goddess of nocturnal sport,
Dark-veiled Cotytto,[1] to whom the secret flame
Of midnight torches burns! mysterious dame,
That ne'er art called but when the dragon womb
Of Stygian darkness spits her thickest gloom
And makes one blot of all the air!
Stay thy cloudy ebon chair,
Wherein thou rid'st with Hecate,[2] and befriend
Us, thy vowed priests, till utmost end
Of all thy dues be done, and none left out;
Ere the blabbing eastern scout,
The nice[3] Morn, on the Indian steep,
From her cabined loop-hole peep,
And to the tell-tale sun descry[4]
Our concealed solemnity.[5]
Come, knit hands, and beat the ground
In a light fantastic round.[6]

[*The Measure*][7]

Break off, break off, I feel the different pace
Of some chaste footing near about this ground.
Run to your shrouds,[8] within these brakes[9] and trees;
Our number may affright. Some virgin sure
(For so I can distinguish by mine art)
Benighted in these woods! Now to my charms,
And to my wily trains:[10] I shall, ere long,

[1] A Thracian goddess of debauchery.

[2] The goddess of witchcraft.

[3] Fastidious. Used sneeringly, as are the words in the next line. What is the grammatical construction of *Morn?* Why "*Indian* steep?" [4] Disclose. [5] Ceremony. [6] Dance.

[7] At this point the first rustic dance or anti-masque is given. [8] Hiding-places. [9] Bushes. [10] Allurements, snares.

Be well stocked with as fair a herd as grazed
About my mother Circe. Thus I hurl
My dazzling spells into the spongy[1] air,
Of power to cheat the eye with blear[2] illusion
And give it false presentments, lest the place
And my quaint habits[3] breed astonishment,
And put the damsel to suspicious flight;
Which must not be, for that's against my course.[4]
I, under fair pretence of friendly ends,
And well-placed words of glozing[5] courtesy,
Baited with reasons not unplausible,
Wind[6] me into the easy-hearted man,
And hug him into snares. When once her eye
Hath met the virtues[7] of this magic dust,
I shall appear some harmless villager,
Whom thrift keeps up about his country gear.[8]
But here she comes; I fairly[9] step aside,
And harken, if I may, her business here.

The LADY *enters.*

Lady. This way the noise was, if mine ear be true,
My best guide now. Methought[10] it was the sound
Of riot and ill-managed merriment,
Such as the jocund flute, or gamesome pipe,
Stirs up among the loose unlettered hinds,[11]
When, for their teeming flocks, and granges full,

[1] Absorbent. [2] Deceiving. [3] Clothes. [4] Course of action.

[5] Flattering and deceiving. [6] Twist like a serpent.

[7] Power. Cf. "*virtuous* ring and glass." Il Penseroso, line 113.

[8] "Whom frugality or good husbandry keeps awake to attend to his rural business." [9] Quietly. [10] It seemed to me.

[11] Loose-living, uneducated farm-laborers.

In wanton dance they praise the bounteous Pan,[1]
And thank the gods amiss.[2] I should be loth
To meet the rudeness and swilled insolence[3]
Of such late wassailers;[4] yet, oh! where else
Shall I inform[5] my unacquainted feet
In the blind mazes of this tangled wood?
My brothers, when they saw me wearied out
With this long way, resolving here to lodge
Under the spreading favour of these pines,
Stepped, as they said, to the next thicket-side,
To bring me berries, or such cooling fruit
As the kind hospitable woods provide.
They left me then when the grey-hooded even
Like a sad votarist in palmer's weed,[6]
Rose from the hindmost wheels of Phœbus' wain.[7]
But where they are, and why they came not back,
Is now the labour of my thoughts. 'Tis likeliest
They had engaged[8] their wandering steps too far;
And envious darkness, ere they could return,
Had stole them from me. Else, O thievish night,
Why shouldst thou, but for some felonious end,
In thy dark lantern thus close up the stars
That nature hung in heaven, and filled their lamps
With everlasting oil, to give due light
To the misled and lonely traveller?

[1] God of shepherds and *all* rural affairs. [2] In the wrong way.

[3] Insolences caused by swilling or drinking. [4] Revelers.

[5] Get information for.

[6] "Sad" means "serious" rather than "melancholy." A votarist is one who has taken a vow, a palmer, one who carries a palm branch in token of having been to the Holy Land. "Weed" means "garment." [7] The sun's chariot. [8] Drawn on.

This is the place, as well as I may guess,
Whence even now the tumult of loud mirth
Was rife[1] and perfect in my listening ear;
Yet nought but single[2] darkness do I find,
What might this be? A thousand fantasies
Begin to throng into my memory,
Of calling shapes, and beckoning shadows[3] dire,
And airy tongues that syllable men's names
On sands, and shores, and desert wildernesses.[4]
These thoughts may startle well,[5] but not astound
The virtuous mind, that ever walks attended
By a strong siding champion, Conscience.[6]
O, welcome, pure-eyed Faith, white-handed Hope,
Thou hovering angel, girt with golden wings,
And thou unblemished form of Chastity![7]
I see ye visibly, and now believe
That He, the Supreme Good, to whom all things ill[8]
Are but as slavish officers of vengeance,
Would send a glistering[9] guardian, if need were,

[1] Abundant. [2] Complete. [3] "Shapes" and "shadows" suggest *ghosts* and *spirits.*

[4] Read lines 205-209 aloud, pronouncing each word distinctly, until their beauty and imaginative suggestiveness become evident. Do not miss the *hissing* alliteration.

[5] "May well startle."

[6] The line is scanned as follows:

' ' ' ' '
"By a strong siding champion, Conscience"

[7] We expect "Charity" to go with Faith and Hope, and the surprise emphasizes chastity, or purity, the theme of the poem.

' ' ' ' '
[8] "That He the Supreme Good to whom all things ill"

[9] Note the form of the word.

To keep my life and honour unassailed.
Was I deceived, or did a sable cloud
Turn forth her silver lining on the night?
I did not err, there does a sable cloud
Turn forth her silver lining on the night,[1]
And casts a gleam over this tufted grove.
I cannot halloo to my brothers, but
Such noise as I can make to be heard farthest
I'll venture; for my new-enlivened spirits
Prompt me; and they, perhaps, are not far off.

SONG.

Sweet Echo, sweetest nymph, that liv'st unseen
Within thy airy shell,[2]
By slow Meander's[3] margent[4] green
And in the violet-embroidered vale[5]
Where the love-lorn[6] nightingale
Nightly to thee her sad song mourneth well;
Canst thou not tell me of a gentle pair
That likest thy Narcissus[7] are?
O, if thou have
Hid them in some flowery cave,
Tell me but where,
Sweet queen of Parley,[8] Daughter of the Sphere[9]

[1] Note the repetition.

[2] The "airy shell" is the atmosphere. [3] The Meander is the river in Asia Minor whose winding course has given us the word "meander." [4] "Margent" is an old form of "margin."

[5] Possibly refers to the vale of Colonus, near Athens.

[6] Probably means "sad through love." Cf. Il Penseroso, lines 57-62.

[7] The beautiful youth whom Echo loved and for whose love she pined away until she was only a voice.

[8] Talk. Cf. *Parliament.* [9] The "airy shell" of line 231.

So mayst thou be-translated to the skies,
And give resounding[1] grace to all heaven's harmonies.

Enter COMUS

Comus. Can any mortal mixture of earth's mould
Breathe such divine enchanting ravishment?
Sure something holy lodges in that breast,
And with these raptures moves the vocal air
To testify his[2] hidden residence.
How sweetly did they float upon the wings
Of silence, through the empty-vaulted night,
At every fall[3] smoothing the raven-down
Of darkness, till it smiled! I have oft heard
My mother Circe, with the Sirens[4] three,
Amidst the flowery-kirtled Naiades,[5]
Culling their potent herbs and baleful drugs,
Who, as they sang, would take the prisoned soul,
And lap it in Elysium;[6] Scylla wept,
And chid her barking waves into attention,
And fell[7] Charybdis murmured soft applause.
Yet they in pleasing slumber lulled the sense,
And in sweet madness robbed it of itself;

[1] Literally *"re-sounding,"* repeating, echoing. "Heaven's harmonies" refers to the "music of the spheres." [2] Its.

[3] Cadence. Scan the line. [4] Water nymphs who lived on a rocky island near Sicily and lured mariners to destruction by their sweet singing. [5] Fresh-water nymphs, or maids, with garments made of or adorned with flowers.

[6] For *Elysium,* see L'Allegro, line 147 and note. *Scylla,* a monster with a voice like a bark, is identified with a rock on the Italian side of the Strait of Messina. between Italy and Sicily; Charybdis, with a whirlpool on the Sicilian side of the same strait. Both were considered very dangerous to sailors. "Between Scylla and Charybdis" was practically the classical equivalent for our "Between the devil and the deep sea."

[7] Fierce.

But such a sacred and home-felt[1] delight,
Such sober certainty of waking bliss,[2]
I never heard till now.[3] I'll speak to her,
And she shall be my queen. Hail, foreign wonder!
Whom certain[4] these rough shades did never breed,
Unless the goddess that in rural shrine
Dwell'st here with Pan, or Sylvan,[5] by blest song
Forbidding every bleak unkindly fog
To touch the prosperous growth of this tall wood.
Lady. Nay, gentle shepherd, ill is lost that praise[6]
That is addressed to unattending ears;
Not any boast of skill, but extreme shift[7]
How to regain my severed company,
Compelled me to awake the courteous Echo
To give me answer from her mossy couch.
Comus. What chance, good lady, hath bereft you thus?
Lady. Dim darkness, and this leafy labyrinth.
Comus. Could that divide you from near-ushering guides?
Lady. They left me, weary, on a grassy turf.
Comus. By falsehood, or discourtesy, or why?
Lady. To seek, i' the valley, some cool friendly spring.
Comus. And left your fair side all unguarded, lady?
Lady. They were but twain, and purposed quick return.
Comus. Perhaps forestalling night prevented them.

[1] Felt home, felt deeply.

[2] "Waking bliss" is apposed to the "pleasing slumber" produced by the Sirens' song. This is a famous line. Why?

[3] To whom does this whole passage refer? What characteristic of the masque does it illustrate?

[4] Compare our slang use of "sure." [5] Cf. See note on Il Penseroso, line 134. [6] "That praise is unfortunately lost."

[7] Last resort.

Lady. How easy my misfortune is to hit!
Comus. Imports there loss, beside the present need?[1]
Lady. No less than if I should my brothers lose.
Comus. Were they of manly prime, or youthful bloom?
Lady. As smooth as Hebe's[2] their unrazored lips.
Comus. Two such I saw, what time[3] the laboured ox
In his loose traces from the furrow came,
And the swinked hedger[4] at his supper sat;
I saw them under a green mantling vine
That crawls along the side of yon small hill,
Plucking ripe clusters from the tender shoots;
Their port[5] was more than human, as they stood.
I took it for a fairy vision[6]
Of some gay creatures of the element,[7]
That in the colours of the rainbow live,
And play i' the plighted[8] clouds. I was awe-struck,
And, as I passed, I worshipped. If those you seek,
It were a journey like the path to heaven
To help you find them.[9]
Lady. Gentle villager,
What readiest way would bring me to that place?
Comus. Due west it rises from this shrubby point.
Lady. To find out that, good shepherd, I suppose,
In such a scant allowance of star-light,
Would overtask the best land-pilot's art,
Without the sure guess of well-practised feet.

[1] "Is their loss of importance?"

[2] See note on L'Allegro, line 29. [3] When.

[4] The tired farm-laborer. [5] Bearing. [6] Scan the line.

[7] Air. [8] Plaited, folded.

[9] This whole passage is similar to lines 244-250.

Comus. I know each lane, and every alley green,
Dingle,[1] or bushy dell, of this wild wood,
And every bosky bourn[2] from side to side,
My daily walks and ancient neighbourhood;
And if your stray attendance[3] be yet lodged,
Or shroud within these limits, I shall know
Ere morrow wake or the low-roosted[4] lark
From her thatched pallet[5] rouse; if otherwise,
I can conduct you, lady to a low
But loyal cottage, where you may be safe
Till further quest.
Lady. Shepherd, I take thy word,
And trust thy honest-offered courtesy,
Which oft is sooner found in lowly sheds[6]
With smoky rafters than in tapestry halls
And courts of princes, where it[7] first was named
And yet[8] is most pretended. In a place
Less warranted than this, or less secure,
I cannot be, that I should fear to change it.[9]
Eye me, blest Providence, and square[10] my trial
To my proportioned strength. Shepherd, lead on.
[*Exeunt.*

[1] A "dingle" is a narrow valley, very similar to a "dell" but with steeper sides.

[2] Bushy *brook* (burn) or *boundary,* it is difficult to say which. [3] Strayed attendants.

[4] *i.e.,* on the ground. The skylark *sings* high in the air.

[5] Grass-woven nest. What are the two possible constructions of "rouse?" [6] Poor cottages.

[7] *i.e.,* courtesy. What is the derivation of "courtesy?"

[8] Does "yet" mean "still" or "nevertheless?"

[9] "Any other place will be more free from danger than this, so I need not fear to change."

[10] Make proportional and sufficient.

Enter the Two Brothers.

First Br. Unmuffle, ye faint stars; and thou fair moon,
That wont'st[1] to love the traveller's benison,
Stoop[2] thy pale visage through an amber cloud,
And disinherit[3] Chaos that reigns here
In double night of darkness and of shades;
Or, if your influence[4] be quite dammed up
With black usurping mists, some gentle taper,
Though a rush-candle[5] from the wicker-hole[6]
Of some clay habitation, visit us
With thy long-levelled rule[7] of streaming light,
And thou shalt be our star of Arcady,[8]
Or Tyrian cynosure.
Sec. Br. Or, if our eyes
Be barred that happiness, might we but hear
The folded flocks, penned in their wattled cotes,[9]
Or sound of pastoral reed with oaten stops,[10]
Or whistle from the lodge, or village cock
Count the night watches[11] to his feathery dames,
'Twould be some solace yet, some little cheering,
In this close dungeon of innumerous[12] boughs.

[1] Art accustomed.

[2] Cf. Il Penseroso, line 72, "stooping through a fleecy cloud."

[3] Dispossess. Chaos, the formless, unorganized Void of the ancients. [4] Note the meaning of the word.

[5] Candle with the pith of a rush for a wick.

[6] Wicker-work window. [7] Ruler, drawing instrument.

[8] Constellation of the Greater Bear, probably a particular star. Callisto, an Arcadian princess, was changed into this constellation, by which the Greek sailors steered. The Tyrians steered by the Pole Star, in the Lesser Bear. For *cynosure*, see note on L'Allegro, line 80. [9] Sheep pens made of interwoven boughs. [10] A shepherd's pipe of flute with holes (stops) cut in the oaten straw from which it was made.

[11] Refers to the rooster's supposed practice of crowing every hour of the night. [12] Innumerable.

But, oh, that hapless virgin, our lost sister!
Where may she wander now, whither betake her
From the chill dew, among rude burs and thistles?
Perhaps some cold bank is her bolster now,
Or 'gainst the rugged bark of some broad elm
Leans her unpillowed head, fraught with sad fears.
What, if in wild amazement and affright,
Or, while we speak, within the direful grasp
Of savage hunger, or of savage heat?[1]

First Br. Peace, brother, be not over-exquisite[2]
To cast the fashion[3] of uncertain evils:
For, grant they be so,[4] while they rest unknown,
What need a man forestall his date of grief,
And run to meet what he would most avoid?
Or, if they be but false alarms of fear,
How bitter is such self-delusion!
I do not think my sister so to seek,
Or so unprincipled in virtue's book,
And the sweet peace that goodness bosoms[5] ever,
As that the single want of light and noise
(Not being in danger, as I trust she is not)
Could stir the constant mood of her calm thoughts,
And put them into misbecoming plight.
Virtue could see to do what Virtue would,[6]
By her own radiant light, though sun and moon
Were in the flat sea sunk. And Wisdom's self
Oft seeks to sweet retirèd solitude,
Where, with her best nurse, Contemplation,[7]
She plumes her feathers, and lets grow her wings.

[1] *Hunger* of wild *beasts* or *lust* of *savage men.*

[2] Too particularizing. [3] Forecast the form. [4] *i.e.,* uncertain.

[5] Holds in the heart. [6] Wishes to do.

[7] Cf. Il Penseroso, lines 52-53.

That, in the various bustle of resort,
Were all to-ruffled, and sometimes impaired.
He that has light within his own clear breast
May sit i' the centre,[1] and enjoy bright day:
But he that hides a dark soul and foul thoughts,
Benighted walks under the mid-day sun;
Himself is his own dungeon.
Sec. Br. 'Tis most true,
That musing meditation most affects[2]
The pensive secrecy of desert cell,[3]
Far from the cheerful haunt of men and herds,
And sits as safe as in a senate-house;
For who would rob a hermit of his weeds,
His few books, or his beads,[4] or maple dish,
Or do his grey hairs any violence?
But Beauty, like the fair Hesperian tree,[5]
Laden with blooming gold, had need the guard
Of dragon-watch, with unenchanted eye,
To save her blossoms, and defend her fruit
From the rash hand of bold Incontinence.
You may as well spread out the unsunned heaps
Of miser's treasure by an outlaw's den,
And tell me it is safe, as bid me hope
Danger will wink on[6] Opportunity,
And let a single helpless maiden pass
Uninjured in this wild surrounding waste.

[1] *i.e.,* center of the earth. [2] Loves. [3] Compare Il Penseroso, lines 167-168.

[4] Rosary. [5] The tree bearing the golden apples and guarded by a dragon in the garden of the daughters of Hesperus. Who slew the dragon and secured the apples?

[6] Shut the eye to, decline to see.

Of night or loneliness, it recks me not;[1]
I fear the dread events that dog them both,
Lest some ill-greeting touch attempt the person
Of our unownèd[2] sister.
First Br. I do not, brother,
Infer[3] as if I thought my sister's state
Secure without all doubt or controversy;
Yet, where an equal poise of hope and fear
Does arbitrate the event, my nature is
That I incline to hope, rather than fear,
And gladly banish squint suspicion.
My sister is not so defenceless left
As you imagine; she has a hidden strength,
Which you remember not.
Sec. Br. What hidden strength,
Unless the strength of Heaven, if you mean that?
First Br. I mean that, too, but yet a hidden strength
Which, if Heaven gave it, may be termed her own:
'Tis chastity, my brother, chastity:
She that has that is clad in cómplete steel,
And, like a quivered nymph, with arrows keen.
May trace huge forests, and unharboured[4] heaths.
Infamous hills, and sandy perilous wilds,
Where, through the sacred rays of chastity,
No savage fierce, bandit, or mountaineer,[5]
Will dare to soil her virgin purity.
Yea, there, where very desolation dwells,
By grots and caverns shagged with horrid shades,
She may pass on with unblenched[6] majesty,
Be it not done in pride, or in presumption.

[1] I take no account of, matters not to me.

[2] Unmarried, unprotected. [3] Argue.

[4] Without shelter. *Harbor*, originally, was not connected with the sea. [5] Why are mountaineers classed with bandits? [6] Unfaltering, and unblanching.

Some say, no evil thing that walks by night,
In fog or fire, by lake or moorish fen,
Blue meagre hag, or stubborn unlaid ghost[1]
That breaks his magic chains at curfew time,[2]
No goblin, or swart fairy of the mine,[3]
Hath hurtful power o'er true virginity.
Do ye believe me yet, or shall I call
Antiquity from the old schools of Greece,
To testify the arms of chastity?
Hence[4] had the huntress Dian[5] her dread bow,
Fair silver-shafted queen, for ever chaste,[6]
Wherewith she tamed the brinded[7] lioness
And spotted mountain-pard,[8] but set at nought
The frivolous bolt of Cupid; gods and men
Feared her stern frown, and she was queen o' the woods.
What was that snaky-headed Gorgon shield[9]
That wise Minerva wore, unconquered virgin,
Wherewith she freezed her foes to congealed stone,
But rigid looks of chaste austerity

[1] Ghosts could be "laid" by pacifying them, *i.e.,* doing the thing they wished done, so they would no longer "walk" or wander about. [2] Ghosts and spirits generally could "walk" only between curfew and cock crow. Cf. L'Allegro, line 114.

[3] A gnome. [4] Therefore, *i.e.,* as a weapon of chastity.

[5] The goddess Diana; in Heaven, the moon (also called Cynthia and Phoebe); on earth, a huntress. Read Ben Jonson's *Hymn to Diana,* beginning:

"Queen and huntress, chaste and fair."

[6] An exquisite line. Note the appropriateness of "silver-shafted." [7] Brindled, streaked. [8] *Pard* is sometimes a shortened form of leopard and may be so here.

[9] The "Gorgon-shield" was a shield on which was placed the snaky head of Medusa, one of the monstrous creatures known as Gorgons, who was slain by Perseus. Minerva was the goddess of wisdom.

And noble grace, that dashed brute violence
With sudden adoration and blank awe?
So dear to Heaven is saintly Chastity
That, when a soul is found sincerely so,
A thousand liveried angels lackey[1] her,
Driving far off each thing of sin and guilt;
And, in clear dream and solemn vision,[2]
Tell her of things that no gross ear can hear,
Till oft converse with heavenly habitants
Begin to cast a beam on the outward shape,
The unpolluted temple of the mind,
And turns it, by degrees, to the soul's essence,
Till all be made immortal. But when lust,
By unchaste looks, loose gestures, and foul talk,
But most by lewd and lavish act of sin,
Lets in defilement to the inward parts,
The soul grows clotted by contagion,
Embodies, and embrutes,[3] till she quite lose
The divine property of her first being.[4]
Such are those thick and gloomy shadows[5] damp
Oft seen in charnel vaults and sepulchres
Lingering and sitting by a new-made grave,
As loth to leave the body that it loved,
And linked itself, by carnal sensuality,
To a degenerate and degraded state.[6]

Sec. Br. How charming is divine philosophy!
Not harsh and crabbéd, as dull fools suppose,

[1] Attend. [2] Scan the line. [3] Become corporeal and brutish. [4] Existence, state of being. [5] Ghosts.

[6] This whole passage is the complete statement of the theme of the poem, which the incidents are intended to illustrate. The incident of Una and the Lion in the "Faerie Queene" is an allegorical illustration of the same truth. Perhaps the best illustration from practical life is the reverence for a pure woman in the old mining camps of the West.

But musical as in Apollo's[1] lute;
And a perpetual feast of nectared[2] sweets
Where no crude surfeit reigns.[3]
First Br. List! list! I hear
Some far-off halloo break the silent air.
Sec. Br. Methought so, too; what should it be?
First Br. For certain,
Either some one, like us, night-foundered here,
Or else some neighbour woodman, or, at worst,
Some roving robber calling to his fellows.
Sec. Br. Heaven keep my sister. Again, again, and near!
Best draw,[4] and stand upon our guard.
First Br. I'll halloo:
If he be friendly, he comes well: if not,
Defence[5] is a good cause, and Heaven be for us!

Enter the attendant Spirit, habited like a Shepherd.

That halloo I should know. What are you? speak;
Come not too near: you fall on iron stakes[6] else.
Spir. What voice is that? my young Lord? speak again.
Sec. Br. O brother, 'tis my father's shepherd, sure.
First Br. Thyrsis?[7] whose artful strains have oft delayed
The huddling brook to hear his madrigal,[8]
And sweetened[9] every musk-rose of the dale?
How camest thou here, good swain, Hath any ram
Slipped from the fold, or young kid lost his dam,
Or straggling wether the pent flock forsook?

[1] Apollo was the god of music and poetry.

[2] Heavenly. Cf. *ambrosial,* line 16.

[3] Another famous passage. Note how musical it is.

[4] We had best draw our swords. [5] Self defense.

[6] *i.e.,* their swords. [7] See note on L'Allegro, line 83.

[8] Pastoral song. [9] Made it sweeter by singing its praise. For whom is the compliment intended?

How couldst thou find this dark sequestered nook?
Spir. O, my loved master's heir, and his next[1] joy,
I came not here on such a trivial toy[2]
As a strayed ewe, or to pursue the stealth
Of pilfering wolf; not all the fleecy wealth
That doth enrich these downs[3] is worth a thought
To this my errand, and the care it brought.
But, oh, my virgin lady, where is she?
How chance she is not in your company?
First Br. To tell thee sadly,[4] shepherd, without blame
Or our neglect, we lost her as we came.
Spir. Ay me unhappy! then my fears are true.
First Br. What fears, good Thyrsis? Prithee[5] briefly show.
Spir. I'll tell ye. 'Tis not vain or fabulous
(Though so esteemed by shallow ignorance)
What the sage poets,[6] taught by the heavenly Muse,
Storied[7] of old, in high immortal verse,
Of dire Chimeras,[8] and enchanted isles,
And rifted rocks whose entrance leads to Hell;
For such there be, but unbelief is blind.
Within the navel[9] of this hideous wood,
Immured in cypress shades, a sorcerer dwells,
Of Bacchus and of Circe born, great Comus,
Deep skilled in all his mother's witcheries;
And here to every thirsty wanderer
By sly enticement gives his baneful cup,
With many murmurs[10] mixed, whose pleasing poison
The visage quite transforms of him that drinks,

[1] Nearest, dearest. [2] Trifle.
[3] Hills. Cf. Southdowns, a breed of sheep from the South Downs or south hills of England. [4] Seriously, truly.
[5] (I) pray thee. [6] Such as Homer and Vergil.
[7] Told stories of. Cf. "storied windows" Il Penseroso 169.
[8] Fire-breathing monsters. [9] Center. [10] Incantations.

And the inglorious likeness of a beast
Fixes instead, unmoulding reason's mintage
Charactered[1] in the face. This have I learned
Tending my flocks hard by i' the hilly crofts[2]
That brow this bottom-glade whence, night by night,
He and his monstrous[3] rout are heard to howl,
Like stabled[4] wolves or tigers at their prey,
Doing abhorrèd rites to Hecate[5]
In their obscurèd haunts of inmost bowers.
Yet have they many baits and guileful spells,
To inveigle and invite the unwary sense
Of them that pass unwittingly by the way.
This evening late, by then[6] the chewing flocks
Had ta'en their supper on the savoury herb
Of knot-grass dew-besprent, and were in fold,
I sat me down to watch upon a bank
With ivy canopied, and interwove
With flaunting honeysuckle, and began,
Wrapt in a pleasing fit of melancholy,
To meditate[7] my rural minstrelsy,
Till fancy had her fill. But, ere a close,[8]
The wonted roar was up amidst the woods,
And filled the air with barbarous dissonance:
At which I ceased, and listened them awhile,
Till an unusual stop of sudden silence
Gave respite to the drowsy-flighted[9] steeds
That draw the litter of close-curtained Sleep.
At last, a soft and solemn breathing sound

[1] (Probably *char-ac'-tcrcd*). Written, stamped.

[2] Small fields.

[3] What does *monstrous* mean? [4] In dens. [5] Three syllables.

[6] This phrase introduces a parenthetical expression.

[7] Practice. [8] Before I had finished a song.

[9] Sleepy but still flying on account of the noise which stopped just before the lady began to sing.

Rose like a stream of rich distilled perfumes
And stole upon the air, that even silence
Was took[1] ere she was 'ware, and wished she might
Deny her nature and be never more,
Still[2] to be so displaced. I was all ear,
And took in strains that might create a soul
Under the ribs of Death.[3] But, oh, ere long,
Too well I did perceive it was the voice
Of my most honoured lady, your dear sister.
Amazed I stood, harrowed with grief and fear,
And, "oh, poor hapless nightingale," thought I,
"How sweet thou sing'st, how near the deadly snare!"
Then down the lawns I ran with headlong haste,
Through paths and turnings often trod by day.
Till, guided by mine ear, I found the place
Where that damned wizard, hid in sly disguise
(For so by certain signs I knew), had met
Already, ere my best speed could prevent,
The aidless innocent Lady, his wished prey;
Who gently asked if he had seen such two,
Supposing him some neighbour villager.
Longer I durst not stay, but soon I guessed
Ye were the two she meant; with that I sprang
Into swift flight, till I had found you here;
But further know I not.
Sec. Br. O night and shades,
How are ye joined with hell in triple knot
Against the unarmed weakness of one virgin,
Alone and helpless! Is this the confidence
You gave me, brother?
First Br. Yes, and keep it still;
Lean on it safely; not a period[4]

[1] Enchanted. [2] "Always," as it often means.

[3] Refers to the story of Eve's creation from a rib of Adam. The whole sentence is a pretty strong compliment.

[4] Sentence. Scan the line.

Shall be unsaid for me. Against the threats
Of malice, or of sorcery, or that power
Which erring men call Chance, this I hold firm:
Virtue may be assailed, but never hurt;
Surprised by unjust force, but not enthralled;
Yea, even that which Mischief meant most harm,
Shall in the happy trial prove most glory:
But evil on itself shall back recoil,
And mix no more with goodness; when, at last,
Gathered like scum, and settled to itself,
It shall be in eternal restless change
Self-fed and self-consumed. If this fail,
The pillared firmament is rottenness,
And earth's base built on stubble.. But come, let's on!
Against the opposing will and arm of Heaven
May never this just sword be lifted up;
But for that damned magician, let him be girt
With all the grisly legions that troop
Under the sooty flag of Acheron,[1]
Harpies and hydras,[2] or all the monstrous forms
'Twixt Africa and Ind, I'll find him out,
And force him to return his purchase[3] back,
Or drag him by the curls to a foul death,
Cursed as his life.

Spir. Alas! good ventrous youth,
I love thy courage yet, and bold emprise,[4]
But here thy sword can do thee little stead.
Far other arms and other weapons must
Be those that quell the might of hellish charms:
He with his bare wand can unthread thy joints,
And crumble all thy sinews.

[1] A river of the lower world. [2] Harpies were monsters, half human, half bird. The hydra was the many headed serpent killed by Hercules. [3] That taken by force or stealth.

[4] Enterprise.

First Br. Why, prithee, shepherd,
How durst thou then thyself approach so near
As to make this relation?[1]
Spir. Care, and utmost shifts
How to secure the Lady from surprisal,
Brought to my mind a certain shepherd lad,[2]
Of small regard to see to, yet well skilled
In every virtuous[3] plant and healing herb
That spreads her verdant leaf to the morning ray.
He loved me well, and oft would beg me sing,
Which, when I did, he on the tender grass
Would sit, and hearken even to ecstasy;
And, in requital, ope his leathern scrip
And show me simples[4] of a thousand names,
Telling their strange and vigorous faculties.
Amongst the rest, a small unsightly root,
But of divine effect, he culled me out.
The leaf was darkish, and had prickles on it,
But in another country, as he said,
Bore a bright golden flower, but not in this soil;
Unknown, and like esteemed,[5] and the dull swain
Treads on it daily with his clouted shoon;[6]
And yet more medicinal is it than that moly[7]
That Hermes once to wise Ulysses gave.

[1] Narrative, that which is related. [2] Milton may here have in mind his friend, Charles Diodati, who taught him botany according to the Latin poem which Milton wrote on his friend's death in 1638.

[3] What does the word mean? [4] Medical herbs.

[5] *i.e., un*-esteemed.

[6] *Shoon* is the old form of *shoes*. *Clouted* may mean *patched* or it may be the equivalent of our *hobnail*.

[7] The plant by which Ulysses was enabled to resist the enchantments of Circe.

He called it Hæmony,[1] and gave it me
And bade me keep it as of sovereign use
'Gainst all enchantments, mildew blast,[2] or damp,
Or ghastly Furies' apparition.
I pursed it up, but little reckoning made,
Till now that this extremity compelled.
But now I find it true; for by this means
I knew the foul enchanter, though disguised,
Entered the very lime-twigs[3] of his spells,
And yet came off. If you have this about you
(As I will give you when you go) you may
Boldly assault the necromancer's hall;
Where if he be, with dauntless hardihood
And brandished blade, rush on him, break his glass,
And shed the luscious liquor on the ground.
But seize his wand. Though he and his cursed crew
Fierce sign of battle make, and menace high,
Or, like the sons of Vulcan,[4] vomit smoke,
Yet will they soon retire if he but shrink.

First Br. Thyrsis, lead on apace. I'll follow thee:—
And some good angel bear a shield before us.

The Scene changes to a stately palace, set out with all manner of deliciousness; soft music, tables spread with all dainties. COMUS *appears with his rabble, and* THE LADY *set in an enchanted chair, to whom he offers his glass, which she puts by, and goes*[5] *about to rise.*

[1] *Hæmony* is Milton's invention. It may mean "magic" from *Hæmonia* (the land of magic) a name for Thessaly.

[2] The east wind was supposed to cause mildew.

[3] Snares, twigs smeared with bird-lime for catching birds.

[4] In Vergil, VIII, 252-253, Cacus, a son of Vulcan, being pursued by Hercules, vomits smoke. [5] Starts, attempts.

Comus. Nay, Lady, sit. If I but wave this wand
Your nerves are all chained up in alabaster,
And you a statue; or, as Daphne[1] was,
Root-bound, that fled Apollo.
Lady. Fool, do not boast;
Thou canst not touch the freedom of my mind
With all thy charms, although this corporal rind
Thou hast immanacled while Heaven sees good.
Comus. Why are you vexed, Lady? Why do you frown?
Here dwell no frowns nor danger; from these gates
Sorrow flies far. See, here be all the pleasures
That fancy can beget on youthful thoughts,
When the fresh blood grows lively, and returns
Brisk as the April buds in primrose season.
And first behold this cordial julep[2] here,
That flames and dances in his crystal bounds,
With spirits of balm and fragrant syrups mixed.
Not that Nepenthes,[3] which the wife of Thone,
In Egypt, gave to Jove-born Helena,
Is of such power to stir up joy as this,
To life so friendly, or so cool to thirst.
Why should you be so cruel to yourself,
And to those dainty limbs, which Nature lent
For gentle usage and soft delicacy?
But you invert the covenants of her trust,

[1] Daphne, a nymph pursued by Apollo, was at her own request changed into a laurel tree.

[2] A heart-strengthening, sweet drink.

[3] Usually written *Nepenthe* in English. In the Odyssey (IV. 219-226) it is defined as "a drug to lull all pain and anger and bring forgetfulness of every sorrow." Cf. Poe's "Raven." The wife of Thone was Polydamia. "Jove-born Helena" is Helen of Troy.

And harshly deal, like an ill borrower,
With that which you received on other terms;
Scorning the unexempt condition
By which all mortal frailty must subsist,
Refreshment after toil, ease after pain,
That[1] have been tired all day without repast,
And timely rest have wanted. But, fair virgin,
This will restore all soon.

Lady. 'Twill not, false traitor!
'Twill not restore the truth and honesty
That thou hast banished from thy tongue with lies.
Was this the cottage and the safe abode
Thou told'st me of? What grim aspècts are these,
These ugly-headed monsters? Mercy guard me!
Hence with thy brewed enchantments, foul deceiver!
Hast thou betrayed my credulous innocence
With visored[2] falsehood and base forgery,
And wouldst thou seek again to trap me here
With liquorish[3] baits, fit to ensnare a brute?
Were it a draught for Juno[4] when she banquets,
I would not taste thy treasonous offer. None,
But such as are good men, can give good things;
And that which is not good is not delicious
To a well-governed and wise appetite.

Comus. O foolishness of men, that lend their ears

[1] You who. The antecedent is "who" in line 682.

[2] Wearing a mask. [3] Likerish, tempting the appetite.

[4] Wife of Jove and queen of heaven.

To those budge doctors[1] of the Stoic fur,
And fetch their precepts from the Cynic tub,[2]
Praising the lean and sallow abstinence!
Wherefore did Nature pour her bounties forth
With such a full and unwithdrawing hand,
Covering the earth with odours, fruits, and flocks,
Thronging the seas with spawn innumerable,
But all to[3] please and sate the curious taste?
And set to work millions of spinning worms,
That in their green shops weave the smooth-haired silk,
To deck her sons; and, that no corner might
Be vacant of her plenty, in her own loins
She hutched[4] the all-worshipped ore and precious gems,
To store her children with. If all the world
Should, in a pet[5] of temperance, feed on pulse,[6]
Drink the clear stream, and nothing wear but frieze,[7]
The All-giver would be unthanked, and would be unpraised,
Not half His riches known, and yet despised;[8]
And we should serve Him as a grudging master,
As a penurious niggard of his wealth,
And live like Nature's bastards, not her sons,
Who would be quite surcharged with her own weight,
And strangled with her waste fertility;
The earth cumbered, and the winged air darked with plumes,

[1] Doctors of philosophy wearing growns trimmed with "budge" -*i.e.*, lamb's wool. "Budge" may here have the derived meaning of "solemn."

[2] A reference to Diogenes, the cynic philosopher, who is said to have lived in a tub. The Stoic and Cynic philosophers are referred to sneeringly on account of their contempt for the pleasures of the senses. [3] Except only to.

[4] A *hutch* was a box. [5] Peevish fit. [6] Peas, beans, etc.

[7] Coarse cloth. [8] And even those which are known, despised.

The herds would over-multitude[1] their lords,
The sea, o'erfraught,[2] would swell, and the unsought diamonds
Would so imblaze the forehead of the deep,[3]
And so bestud[4] with stars, that they[5] below
Would grow inured[6] to light, and come at last
To gaze upon the sun with shameless brows.
List, lady; be not coy, and be not cozened[7]
With that same vaunted name, virginity.
Beauty is Nature's coin, must not be hoarded,
But must be current; and the good thereof
Consists in mutual and partaken bliss,
Unsavoury in the enjoyment of itself.[8]
If you let slip time, like a neglected rose,
It withers on the stalk with languished head.
Beauty is Nature's brag, and must be shown
In courts, at feasts, and high solemnities,
Where most may wonder at the workmanship.
It is for homely features to keep home;
They had their name thence,[9] coarse complexions,
And cheeks of sorry grain,[10] will serve to ply
The sampler,[11] and to tease[12] the huswife's[13] wool.
What need a vermeil[14]-tinctured lip for that,

[1] Out-number. [2] Over-loaded, *i.e.*, with fishes.

[3] The deep may mean the center of the earth. [4] Supply "it" after "bestud." [5] "They" would mean *gnomes* if "deep" the center of the earth. [6] Accustomed. [7] Deceived, cheated.

[8] *i.e.*, beauty. [9] This is the second derivation Milton has pointed out. Cf. line 325. [10] Of unpleasant color. Cf. "All in a robe of darkest grain" Il Penseroso 33.

[11] A sample or pattern of needle-work.

[12] To comb wool, to raise the nap of cloth. From these is derived our meaning of "irritate." [13] From "housewife." Cf. "hussy."

[14] Vermilion.

Love-darting eyes, or tresses like the morn?
There was another meaning in these gifts;
Think what, and be advised; you are but young yet.

Lady. I had not thought to have unlocked my lips
In this unhallowed air, but that this juggler
Would think to charm my judgment, as[1] mine eyes,
Obtruding false rules pranked in Reason's garb.
I hate when Vice can bolt[2] her arguments,
And Virtue has no tongue to check her pride.
Impostor, do not charge most innocent Nature
As if she would[3] her children should be riotous
With her abundance; she, good cateress,
Means her provision only to the good
That live according to her sober laws,
And holy dictate of spare temperance.
If every just man that now pines with want
Had but a moderate and beseeming share
Of that which lewdly-pampered Luxury
Now heaps upon some few with vast excess,
Nature's full blessings would be well dispensed
In unsuperfluous even proportion,[4]
And she no whit encumbered with her store:
And then the Giver would be better thanked,
His praise due paid, for swinish Gluttony
Ne'er looks to Heaven amidst his gorgeous feast,
But, with besotted base ingratitude
Crams, and blasphemes his Feeder. Shall I go on?
Or have I said enough? To him that dares
Arm his profane tongue with contemptuous words
Against the sun-clad power of chastity

[1] Supply "well as" after *as*. [2] Sift and so refine, make subtle.
[3] Wished. [4] In unsuperfl'us ev'n proportion.

Fain would I something say; yet to what end?
Thou hast nor ear nor soul to apprehend
The sublime notion and high mystery
That must be uttered to unfold the sage
And serious doctrine of virginity,
And thou art worthy that thou shouldst not know
More happiness than this thy present lot.
Enjoy your dear wit, and gay rhetoric
That hath so well been taught her dazzling fence;[1]
Thou art not fit to hear thyself convinced:
Yet, should I try, the uncontrollèd worth
Of this pure cause would kindle my rapt spirits
To such a flame of sacred vehemence,
That dumb things would be moved to sympathise,
And the brute[2] earth would lend her nerves,[3] and shake
Till all thy magic structures, reared so high,
Were shattered into heaps o'er thy false head.

Comus. She fables not. I feel that I do fear
Her words, set off by[4] some superior power;
And though not mortal, yet a cold shuddering dew
Dips me all o'er, as when the wrath of Jove
Speaks thunder and the chains of Erebus
To some of Saturn's crew.[5] I must dissemble,
And try her yet more strongly.—Come, no more!
This is mere[6] moral babble, and direct

[1] Literally, the art of fencing; figuratively, skill in arguing.

[2] Dumb. [3] Sinews. [4] Supported by.

[5] Proclaims that the punishment of Saturn's followers shall be thunder and imprisonment in the place of darkness. The Titans were "Saturn's crew." Cf. "While yet there was no fear of Jove," Il Penseroso, line 30. [6] Absolute.

Against the canon-laws of our foundation;[1]
I must not suffer this; yet 'tis but the lees
And settings of a melancholy blood.
But this will cure all straight; one sip of this
Will bathe the drooping spirits in delight,
Beyond the bliss of dreams. Be wise, and taste.

The BROTHERS *rush in with swords drawn, wrest his glass out of his hand, and break it against the ground; his rout make sign of resistance, but are all driven in. The Attendant Spirit comes in.*

Spir. What, have you let the false enchanter 'scape?
Oh, ye mistook, ye should have snatched his wand,
And bound him fast. Without his rod reversed,
And backward mutters of dissevering power,
We cannot free the lady that sits here
In stony fetters fixed, and motionless.
Yet stay, be not disturbed; now I bethink me,
Some other means I have which may be used;
Which once of Melibœus[2] old I learnt,
The soothest[3] shepherd that e'er piped on plains.
There is a gentle Nymph, not far from hence,
That with moist curb[4] sways the smooth Severn stream,[5]
Sabrina is her name, a virgin pure:

[1] The fundamental laws of our organization. A *Canon* law is one established by a church council. *Foundation*, a common term then and still used, means an endowed institution or the endowment itself. Cf. The Carnegie Foundation for Teachers.

[2] Melibœus is a common name for shepherds in classical pastoral poetry. Here it probably means Spenser who was a shepherd, *i.e.*, poet, for whom Milton had great respect and who tells the story of Sabrina in the "Faerie Queene," II, 10, 14.

[3] Truest. [4] The bit by which a horse is guided. [5] Ludlow Castle was near the Severn.

Whilom[1] she was the daughter of Locrine,
That had the sceptre from his father Brute.[2]
She, guiltless damsel, flying the mad pursuit
Of her enragéd stepdame, Guendolen,
Commended her fair innocence to the flood
That stayed her flight with his cross-flowing course.
The water-nymphs, that in the bottom played,
Held up her pearlèd wrists, and took her in,
Bearing her straight to aged Nereus'[3] hall,
Who, piteous of her woes, reared her lank head
And gave her to his daughters to imbathe
In nectared lavers,[4] strewed with asphodel;[5]
And through the porch and inlet of each sense
Dropt in ambrosial oils, till she revived,
And underwent a quick immortal change,
Made goddess of the river. Still she retains
Her maiden gentleness, and oft at eve
Visits the herds along the twilight meadows,
Helping all urchin blasts[6] and ill-luck signs
That the shrewd[7] meddling elf delights to make,
Which she with precious vialed liquors heals:
For which the shepherds, at their festivals,
Carol her goodness loud in rustic lays,
And throw sweet garland wreaths into her stream,
Of pansies, pinks, and gaudy daffodils.

[1] In olden times. [2] Brutus, the reputed founder of the old line of British kings, was supposed to be a descendant of Aeneas, son of Anchises the Trojan.

[3] The father of the water nymphs or Nereids.

[4] Baths filled with nectar. [5] A flower that grows in Elysium.

[6] Influence of mischievous elves. [7] Naughty.

And, as the old swain[1] said, she can unlock
The clasping charm and thaw the numbing spell,
If she be right invoked in warbled song;
For maidenhood she loves, and will be swift
To aid a virgin, such as was herself,
In hard-besetting need. This will I try,
And add the power of some adjuring verse.

SONG.

Sabrina fair,
  Listen where thou art sitting
Under the glassy, cool, translucent wave,
  In twisted braids of lilies knitting
The loose train of thy amber-dropping hair;[2]
  Listen, for dear honour's sake,
  Goddess of the silver lake,[3]
    Listen, and save!

Listen, and appear to us,
In name of great Oceanus;[4]

[1] Melibœus. [2] Hair dropping yellow water or yellow hair dropping water. [3] Probably means the Severn River.

[4] It will be noticed that the names by which Sabrina is conjured are all those of sea divinities: Oceanus was god of the outer sea or ocean stream; Tethys was his wife; Proteus, a soothsayer, lived on the island of Carpathia and, as shepherd of Neptune's flocks, bore a crook; Triton was the "herald of the sea;" Glaucus, a fisherman, was changed into a sea god with prophetic powers; Leucothea, the white goddess, was a woman, Ino, who with her son Palemon, was changed into a sea divinity; Thetis, a daughter of Nereus, was the mother of Achilles; Parthenope was one of the Sirens, supposedly buried near Naples; Ligea was another Siren.

And the Carpathian wizard's hook;
By the earth-shaking Neptune's mace,
And Tethys' grave majestic pace;
By hoary Nereus' wrinkled look,
By scaly Triton's winding shell,
And old soothsaying Glaucus' spell;
By Leucothea's lovely hands,
And her son that rules the strands;
By Thetis' tinsel-slippered feet,[1]
And the songs of Sirens sweet;
By dead Parthenope's dear tomb,
And fair Ligea's golden comb,[2]
Wherewith she sits on diamond rocks,
Sleeking her soft alluring locks;
By all the nymphs that nightly dance
Upon thy streams with wily glance;
Rise, rise, and heave thy rosy head
From thy coral-paven bed,
And bridle in thy headlong wave,
Till thou our summons answered have.
Listen and save.

SABRINA *rises, attended by Water-nymphs, and sings.*

By the rushy-fringèd bank,
Where grow the willow and the osier[3] dank,
My sliding chariot stays,
Thick set with agate, and the azurn[4] sheen
Of turkis[5] blue and emerald green
That in the channel strays;

[1] Homer calls Thetis "silver-footed." By "tinsel" Milton means "silvery." [2] Compare *Die Lorelei.* [3] The water willow.

[4] Azure. [5] Turquoise.

Whilst from off the waters fleet
Thus I set my printless feet
O'er the cowslip's velvet head,
That bends not as I tread.
Gentle Swain, at thy request,
I am here.

Spir. Goddess dear,
We implore thy powerful hand
To undo the charmèd band
Of true virgin here distressed
Through the force and through the wile
Of unblessed enchanter vile.

Sabr. Shepherd, 'tis my offiec best
To help ensnarèd chastity.
Brightest Lady, look on me.
Thus I sprinkle on thy breast
Drops that from my fountain pure
I have kept, of precious cure;
Thrice upon thy finger's tip,
Thrice upon thy rubied lip:
Next this marble venomed seat,
Smeared with gums of glutinous heat,[1]
I touch with chaste palms, moist and cold.
Now the spell has lost his hold;
And I must haste, ere morning hour,
To wait in Amphitrite's[2] bower.

SABRINA *descends, and the* LADY *rises out of her seat.*

Spir. Virgin, daughter of Locrine,
Sprung of old Anchises' line,[3]

[1] Sticky, or gluey, when heated. [2] Wife of Neptune.

[3] See note on line 828.

May thy brimmèd waves for this
Their full tribute never miss
From a thousand petty rills,
That tumble down the snowy hills;
Summer drought, or singèd air,
Never scorch thy tresses fair,
Nor wet October's torrent flood
Thy molten crystal fill with mud;
May thy billows roll ashore
The beryl and the golden ore;
May thy lofty head be crowned
With many a tower and terrace round,
And here and there thy banks upon
With groves of myrrh and cinnamon.[1]
Come, Lady, while Heaven lends us grace,
Let us fly this cursed place,
Lest the sorcerer us entice
With some other new device.
Not a waste or needless sound,
Till we come to holier ground.
I shall be your faithful guide
Through this gloomy covert wide;
And not many furlongs thence
Is your father's residence,
Where this night are met in state

[1] This passage seems confused because Milton *speaks* of the "lofty head" and *thinks* of the banks of the stream. "Round" is probably an adverb modifying "crowned." The last two lines probably mean: "And may thy lofty head be crowned, here and there upon thy banks, with groves, etc."

Many a friend to gratulate[1]
His wished presence; and beside
All the swains, that there abide,
With jigs[2] and rural dance resort.
We shall catch them at their sport,
And our sudden coming there
Will double all their mirth and cheer:
Come, let us haste, the stars grow high,
But night sits monarch yet in the mid sky.

The scene changes, presenting Ludlow Town and the President's Castle; then come in Country Dancers; after them the Attendant Spirit, with the two BROTHERS *and* THE LADY.

SONG

Spir. Back, shepherds,[3] back! Enough your play
Till next sunshine holiday.
Here be, without duck or nod,[4]
Other trippings to be trod
Of lighter toes, and such court guise
As Mercury[5] did first devise
With the mincing Dryades,[6]
On the lawns, and on the leas.

[1] Welcome, rejoice in.

[2] A jig was originally music, vocal or instrumental and may be so used here. Later it meant a dance.

[3] The shepherds are dancing when the spirit and the children enter. This constitutes the second so-called anti-masque. This is followed, after the spirit's second song, by a more courtly dance, "other trippings," in which the spectators probably take part.

[4] That is, without the rustic salutes of the first dance.

[5] The herald of the gods and a deviser of new things, the god of invention. [6] Wood nymphs.

This second Song presents them to their Father and Mother.

Noble Lord, and Lady bright,
I have brought ye new delight.
Here behold so goodly[1] grown
Three fair branches of your own;
Heaven hath timely[2] tried their youth,
Their faith, their patience, and their truth,
And sent them here, through hard assays,
With a crown of deathless praise,
To triumph in victorious dance
O'er sensual folly and intemperance.

The dances ended, the Spirit epilogises

Spir. To the ocean now I fly,
And those happy climes that lie
Where day never shuts his eye,
Up in the broad fields of the sky.
There I suck the liquid air,
All amidst the gardens fair[3]
Of Hesperus and his daughters three
That sing about the golden tree.
Along the crispèd shades and bowers
Revels the spruce[4] and jocund Spring,
The Graces[5] and the rosy-bosomed Hours[6]
Thither all their bounties bring.
There eternal Summer dwells,
And west-winds, with musky wing,
About the cedarn alleys fling
Nard and cassia's[7] balmy smells.

[1] Handsome. [2] In good time, early. [3] See note on line 393.

[4] Daintily appareled. [5] See L'Allegro, line 15.

[6] The goddesses of the seasons. [7] Aromatic plants mentioned in the Bible.

Iris[1] there, with humid bow,
Waters the odorous banks, that blow[2]
Flowers of more mingled hue
Than her purfled[3] scarf can show;
And drenches with Elysian dew
(List, mortals, if your ears be true)
Beds of hyacinth and roses
Where young Adonis[4] oft reposes,
Waxing well of his deep wound
In slumber soft, and on the ground
Sadly sits the Assyrian queen.
But far above in spangled sheen,
Celestial Cupid,[5] her famed son, advanced,
Holds his dear Psyche sweet entranced,
After wandering labours long,
Till free consent the gods among
Make her his eternal bride.
And from her fair unspotted side
Two blissful twins are to be born,[6]
Youth and Joy; so Jove hath sworn.
But now my task is smoothly done,
I can fly or I can run

[1] Goddess of the rainbow. [2] Bloom with. [3] Embroidered.

[4] A youth beloved of Venus who was worshipped by the Assyrians under the name of Ashtaroth. Adonis was mortally wounded by a wild boar. The myth was of Eastern origin; hence the term "Assyrian queen."

[5] The god of love who wedded Psyche, a beautiful maiden. Venus opposed the union and imposed "wandering labors long" upon Psyche, who symbolizes the human soul.

[6] This offspring of Cupid and Psyche is Milton's invention.

Quickly to the green earth's end,
Where the bowed welkin[1] slow doth bend,
And from thence can soar as soon
To the corners of the moon.
Mortals, that would follow me,
Love Virtue; she alone is free.
She can teach ye how to climb
Higher than the sphery chime;[2]
Or if Virtue feeble were,
Heaven itself would stoop to her.[3]

[1] Arched sky. [2] The chiming or musical spheres.

[3] The last six lines summarize the theme of the poem. Learn them by heart.

LYCIDAS

[For most persons, Lycidas is a very difficult poem to understand, so a few preliminary words of explanation may not come amiss. In form, Lycidas is a pastoral elegy, that is, a poem lamenting the dead in language literally applicable to shepherd (pastoral) life. It is a highly specialized literary form, and is apt to seem to us rather formal and artificial. This apparent artificiality may be partly due to the fact that pastoral elegy is not a native English form of poetry. It was first used by classical poets, chiefly Theocritus among the Greeks and Vergil among the Romans; and all modern examples are more or less direct imitations of these ancient authors, so they sometimes seem to lack spontaneity. A second cause of the apparent artificiality of the pastoral elegy is the "conventions," *i.e.*, the regular rules or ways of doing things, of the form itself. In the first place, the persons spoken of are not given their real names but names common to shepherds or country people, such as Corydon, Thyrsis, Lycidas; and their work is spoken of as if it were the tending of sheep or the following of some other rural occupation. This makes the poem seem remote from real life and real sorrow. In the second place, there were certain regular features of a pastoral elegy: usually it began with an invocation of the Muse, introduced various forces of nature and supernatural beings as mourners, and at the close changed from lament into a somewhat more hopeful strain. The introduction of unreal mourners tends to make the whole poem seem to us artificial.

It may be interesting to note some of the reasons why Milton used this poetic form. He wished to write a lament for the death of his college friend, Edward King, a learned young man who was preparing for the ministry and who, as Milton tells us, was himself a poet. All learned men at that time read and wrote Latin and Milton was a great classical student. In lamenting a learned man, he might naturally have used the Latin language (Milton wrote several Latin poems). He preferred the English but it is not surprising that he followed a learned, *i.e.*, classical, example. Again, there is a special fitness in the pastoral form in referring to Edward King for two reasons: First, because King and Milton were both poets and it was customary to speak of poets as shepherds (Cf. Old Melibœus, *i.e.*, Chaucer, "The soothest shepherd," in Comus, lines 822-23); and second, because a Christian minister is often referred to as a shepherd; indeed our word "pastor" is simply the Latin word for shepherd.

So we may perhaps see why Milton used the somewhat formal pastoral elegy to lament the death of his friend and "by occasion" or as we say, incidentally, to express his opinion on church affairs. But even with these general facts understood, Lycidas is still a difficult poem to understand. The outline in the back of the book may assist the student in getting hold of its form and meaning.]

LYCIDAS

Yet once more, O ye laurels, and once more,
Ye myrtles brown, with ivy never sere,
I come, to pluck your berries harsh and crude,
And with forced fingers rude
Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year.[1]
Bitter constraint and sad occasion dear[2]
Compels me to disturb your season due;[3]
For Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime,
Young Lycidas, and hath not left his peer.
Who would not sing for Lycidas? He knew,
Himself to sing, and build the lofty rhyme.
He must not float upon his watery bier
Unwept, and welter[4] to the parching wind
Without the meed[5] of some melodious tear.
Begin, then, Sisters of the sacred well[6]
That from beneath the seat of Jove doth spring;
Begin, and somewhat loudly sweep the string;
Hence with denial vain, and coy excuse.
So may some gentle Muse[7]
With lucky words favour my destined urn.
And, as he passes, turn,
And bid fair peace be to my sable shroud!

[1] He comes once more to pluck berries for a funeral wreath, *i.e.*, he again takes up poetry, though feeling unprepared to lament the death of his friend. [2] Touching closely.

[3] Proper season. [4] Toss about. [5] Benefit, recompense.

[6] The Muses, who haunted the Pierian Spring at the base of Mt. Olympus. [7] Poet.

For we were nursed upon the self-same hill,[1]
Fed the same flock, by fountain, shade, and rill.
Together both, ere the high lawns appeared
Under the opening eyelids of the morn,
We drove[2] a-field, and both together heard
What time[3] the gray-fly winds her sultry horn,
Battening[4] our flocks with the fresh dews of night,
Oft till the star that rose at evening bright
Toward heaven's descent had sloped his westering wheel.
Meanwhile the rural ditties were not mute,[5]
Tempered[6] to the oaten flute;
Rough satyrs danced, and fauns with cloven heel[7]
From the glad sound would not be absent long;
And old Damœtas[8] loved to hear our song.
But, oh! the heavy change, now thou art gone,
Now thou art gone and never must return!
Thee, Shepherd, thee the woods, and desert caves,
With wild thyme and the gadding vine o'ergrown,
And all their echoes, mourn.
The willows, and the hazel copses green,
Shall now no more be seen
Fanning their joyous leaves to thy soft lays.
As killing as the canker[9] to the rose,
Or taint-worm to the weanling[10] herds that graze,

[1] Cambridge University. [2] Supply "our flocks." [3] When.

[4] Fattening. [5] That is, they wrote poetry. [6] Attend.

[7] The satyrs of the Greeks and fauns of the Romans were sportive divinities of the fields and woods, half men, half goats. Here they represent the students of the university.

[8] A conventional pastoral name like *Lycidas*. Here it seems to refer to someone in authority at Cambridge, possibly Milton's old tutor, Chappell.

[9] The canker worm. [10] Just weaned.

Or frost to flowers that their gay wardrobe wear,
When first the white-thorn blows;
Such, Lycidas, thy loss to shepherd's ear.
Where were ye, Nymphs,[1] when the remorseless deep
Closed o'er the head of your loved Lycidas?
For neither were ye playing on the steep[2]
Where your old bards, the famous Druids, lie,
Nor on the shaggy top of Mona[3] high,
Nor yet where Deva[4] spreads her wizard stream.
Ah me! I fondly[5] dream
"Had ye been there"... for what could that have done?
What could the Muse[6] herself that Orpheus bore,
The Muse herself, for her enchanting son
Whom universal nature did lament,
When by the rout that made the hideous roar
His gory visage down the stream was sent,
Down the swift Hebrus to the Lesbian shore?[7]
Alas! what boots[8] it with incessant care
To tend the homely, slighted shepherd's trade,[9]
And strictly meditate[10] the thankless[11] Muse?

[1] The Muses. [2] Milton probably had in mind some mountain in Wales, the reputed burial place of the Druids.

[3] The Latin name for the island of Anglesey off the northwest coast of Wales.

[4] The famous river Dee. It was thought to be a haunt of magicians; hence "wizard stream." [5] Foolishly.

[6] Calliope, the muse of epic poetry.

[7] The Thracian women who tore Orpheus to pieces for his contempt of them after the loss of Eurydice. His limbs were thrown into the Hebrus river and his head borne to the island of Lemnos.

[8] Profits. [9] Write poetry. [10] Practice.

[11] Unprofitable from a worldly point of view.

Were it not better done, as others use,[1]
To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,
Or with the tangles of Neæra's hair?[2]
Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise
(That last infirmity of noble mind)[3]
To scorn delights and live laborious days;
But the fair guerdon when we hope to find,[4]
And think to burst out into sudden blaze,
Comes the blind Fury[5] with the abhorrèd shears
And slits the thin-spun life. "But not the praise,"[6]
Phœbus[7] replied, and touched my trembling ears;[8]
"Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil,
Nor in the glistening foil[9]
Set off to the world, nor in broad rumour lies,
But lives and spreads aloft by those pure eyes
And perfect witness of all-judging Jove;
As he pronounces lastly on each deed,
Of so much fame in heaven except thy meed."

[1] Are accustomed to.

[2] Amaryllis and Neæra were common names for shepherdesses in classical lore and pastoral poetry. Figuratively the passage probably means: "Were it not better to indulge in a life of sensual pleasure?"

[3] The *desire* for fame is the last weakness to be overcome.

[4] But when we hope to find the fair reward.

[5] *Fury* probably means *Fate*. There were three Fates. Atropos was the one which cut off the thread of life which Clotho spun and Lachesis drew out.

[6] *Cuts off* the life; but does *not* cut off or destroy the *praise*. [7] Apollo, god of poetry.

[8] The passage seems to be an imitation of Vergil. The ears were touched as the seat of memory, to recall something to mind; and the "trembling" was caused by excitement at the god's presence.

[9] Gold or silver leaf used to "set off" or bring out the brilliance of jewels. The phrase modifies "lies." The meaning seems to be that fame does not consist in showy achievements exhibited to the world.

O fountain Arethuse, and thou honoured flood,
Smooth-sliding Mincius,[1] crowned with vocal reeds,
That strain I heard was of a higher mood;[2]
But now my oat proceeds,[3]
And listens to the Herald[4] of the sea
That came in Neptune's plea.[5]
He asked the waves, and asked the felon winds,
What hard mishap hath doomed this gentle swain?
And questioned every gust, of rugged wings,
That blows from off each beakèd promontory:
They knew not of his story;
And sage Hippotades[6] their answer brings,
That not a blast was from his dungeon strayed,
The air was calm, and on the level brine
Sleek Panope[7] with all her sisters played.
It was that fatal and perfidious bark,
Built in the eclipse,[8] and rigged with curses dark,
That sunk so low that sacred head of thine.
Next, Camus,[9] reverend sire, went footing slow,

[1] Arethusa, a fountain in Sicily, stands for Theocritus and the other Sicilian pastoral poets; Mincius, a river of northern Italy near which Vergil was born, stands for the great Roman poet.

[2] *Mood* does not mean "state of mind" but "mode" or kind of music. Phoebus's speech was a higher kind of music than the usual pastoral poetry of Theocritus and Vergil.

[3] *i.e.*, I go on in the pastoral strain.

[4] Triton, Neptune's trumpeter. Cf. Comus, line 873.

[5] Probably means: Came in Neptune's defense.

[6] Aeolus, the god of the winds.

[7] One of the daughters of Nereus. [8] Referring to the belief that things built during an eclipse would meet disaster.

[9] The river Cam, representing Cambridge University.

His mantle hairy,[1] and his bonnet sedge[2]
Inwrought with figures dim and on the edge
Like to that sanguine flower inscribed with woe.[3]
"Ah! who hath reft," quoth he, "my dearest pledge!"—
Last come, and last did go,
The Pilot of the Galilean Lake.[4]
Two massy keys he bore, of metals twain,
(The golden opes, the iron shuts amain,)
He shook his mitred[5] locks, and stern bespake:
"How well could I have spared for thee, young swain,
Enow of such as, for their bellies' sake,
Creep, and intrude, and climb into the fold!
Of other care they little reckoning make
Than how to scramble at the shearers' feast[6]
And shove away the worthy bidden guest.
Blind mouths![7] that scarce themselves know how to hold
A sheephook, or have learned aught else the least

[1] *i.e.*, with river grass. [2] His cap of coarse grass.

[3] The bloody flower is the hyacinth. The marks on the leaves were supposed to resemble the Greek words "alas, alas." Hyacinth was a beautiful Spartan youth, beloved of Apollo and accidentally killed by him. He was transformed into a flower whose markings suggested the story of the tragedy.

[4] Saint Peter. Cf. Mathew XVI:19. "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven." The difference in the metal and in the uses of the keys is Milton's invention.

[5] Wearing a mitre or bishop's cap.

[6] For material profit to themselves. The feast of the sheep shearers represents the positions of profit in the church.

[7] A famous expression, on which Ruskin in *Sesame and Lilies* has a famous comment. It is a very strong expression describing those who care only for material gain. Clergymen should *guide and feed*, not be *blind devourers*.

That to the faithful herdsman's art belongs![1]
What recks it them?[2] What need they? They are sped;[3]
And, when they list,[4] their lean and flashy songs
Grate on their scrannel[5] pipes of wretched straw:
The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed,
But, swoln with wind and the rank mist they draw,[6]
Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread;
Besides what the grim wolf,[7] with privy paw,
Daily devours apace, and nothing[8] said.
But that two-handed engine at the door
Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more."[9]

[1] Know nothing about the duties of a true shepherd, *i.e.*, clergymen.

[2] What matters it to them? [3] Have succeeded. [4] Please.

[5] Thin. The whole passage means that these unworthy clergymen preach unspiritual, insipid sermons. *Flashy* does not mean "showy."

[6] The "wind" and "mist" are the empty words of the preacher. [7] The Church of Rome. [8] Supply *is*.

[9] No one knows just what Milton meant by the "two-handed engine" *i.e.*, an instrument (of any sort) requiring two hands to wield it. He may have meant the sword of Justice, or the two houses of Parliament, or the "two-edged sword" of Revelation, or the ax that beheaded Archibishop Laud. At least, he felt some awful retribution was at hand. Within five years after this poem was written the highest official of the English church, Archibishop Laud, had been *beheaded by* Parliament and the Civil War had begun. It will add immensely to the interest of this famous passage to remember that Milton is describing the conditions in the English Church which caused the great Puritan immigration to New England between 1630 and 1640.

Return, Alpheus,[1] the dread voice is past,
That shrunk thy streams; return, Sicilian Muse,
And call the vales, and bid them hither cast
Their bells and flowerets of a thousand hues.
Ye valleys low, where the mild whispers use[2]
Of shades, and wanton winds, and gushing brooks,
On whose fresh lap the swart star[3] sparely looks,
Throw hither all your quaint enamelled eyes[4]
That on the green turf suck the honeyed showers,
And purple[5] all the ground with vernal flowers.
Bring the rathe[6] primrose that forsaken[7] dies,
The tufted crow-toe, and pale jessamine,
The white pink, and the pansy freaked with jet,
The glowing violet,
The musk-rose, and the well-attired woodbine,
With cowslips wan that hang the pensive head,
And every flower that sad embroidery wears;
Bid amaranthus all his beauty shed,
And daffodillies fill their cups with tears,
To strew the laureate hearse[8] where Lycid lies.

[1] A river in the Peloponnesus in Greece, the lover of the fountain Arethusa. As Milton mentioned the latter after his first digression, so he mentions Alpheus after his second digression.

[2] Have their haunt. [3] Sirius, the Dog Star, the star that makes vegetation *swart* or black. "Dog Days" is the period during which Sirius rises and sets with the sun.

[4] Curiously colored flowers.

[5] This is almost certainly an imperative like "throw" above.

[6] Early. The positive from which comes our comparative form *rather*.

[7] Why *forsaken?* By the sunlight or by people?

[8] *Hearse* here means the platform on which the coffin rested. *Laureate, i.e.,* laurel-crowned, refers to the practice of fastening memorial verses to the hearse.

For so, to interpose a little ease,
Let our frail thoughts daily with false surmise—[1]
Ah me! whilst thee the shores and sounding seas
Wash far away, where'er thy bones are hurled,
Whether beyond the stormy Hebrides,[2]
Where thou, perhaps under the whelming tide,
Visit'st the bottom of the monstrous[3] world;
Or whether thou, to our moist vows denied,
Sleep'st by the fable of Bellerus old,[4]
Where the great Vision of the guarded mount[5]
Looks toward Namancos and Bayona's hold:[6]
Look homeward, Angel,[7] now, and melt with ruth;[8]
And, O ye dolphins, waft the hapless youth.[9]
Weep no more, woeful shepherds, weep no more,
For Lycidas, your sorrow, is not dead,
Sunk though he be beneath the watery floor.
So sinks the day-star in the ocean-bed,
And yet anon repairs his drooping head,
And tricks his beams, and, with new spangled ore,
Flames in the forehead of the morning star.
So Lycidas sunk low, but mounted high,

[1] He remembers he is simply *fancying* they are burying Lycidas. [2] Islands of the west coast of Scotland.

[3] Inhabited by monsters. What does the word mean?

[4] The fabled abode of old Bellerus, *i.e.*, Land's End, called *Bellerium* by the Romans. The extreme southwestern point of England.

[5] The vision is the Archangel, St. Michael, supposed to guard a steep rock called St. Michael's Mount and to appear at times in a craggy seat known as St. Michael's chair.

[6] These are places in Spain, near Cape Finisterre. *Hold* means "stronghold" or castle. [7] St. Michael. [8] Pity.

[9] An allusion to the story of Arion, who, thrown overboard by sailors, was borne ashore by dolphins previously attracted by his sweet music.

Through the dear might of Him that walked the waves,[1]
Where, other groves and other streams along,
With nectar pure his oozy locks he laves,
And hears the unexpressive nuptial song[2]
In the blest kingdoms meek of joy and love.
There entertain him all the Saints above,
In solemn troops and sweet societies
That sing, and, singing, in their glory move,
And wipe the tears for ever from his eyes.[3]
Now, Lycidas, the shepherds weep no more;
Henceforth thou art the genius[4] of the shore,
In thy large recompense,[5] and shalt be good
To all that wander in that perilous flood.

Thus sang the uncouth swain to the oaks and rills,
While the still morn went out with sandals gray;
He touched the tender stops of various quills,[6]
With eager thought warbling his Doric lay;[7]
And now the sun had stretched out all the hills,[8]
And now was dropt into the western bay;
At last he rose, and twitched his mantle blue:
To-morrow to fresh woods and pastures new.[9]

[1] The account of Christ's walking on the water may be found in Mathew XVI:22 and following.

[2] The *inexpressible* marriage song. The reference is to Revelation XIX where is described the scene in heaven at the marriage of the Lamb.

[3] Cf. Revelation VII:17: "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

[4] Guardian Spirit. [5] As a great reward for all he had undergone.

[6] The *stops* are the *openings* in the reeds (quills). It means he expressed various feelings.

[7] *Doric lay* here means *pastoral song.* The Sicilian pastoral poets wrote in the Doric dialect.

[8] Lengthened the shadows, of course.

[9] This has become proverbial to indicate taking up a new subject. Milton may *possibly* have had in mind his coming travels.

MILTON'S SPELLING

It must be clearly understood by the pupil that the spelling used in this edition is not that used by Milton. In his time, many words were habitually or frequently spelled differently than at present. In this text Milton's spelling has been modernized almost completely. Except in a few cases, such as *azurn,* where the *form* of the word was different, all his spellings are modernized. It seems a mistake, to the present editor, to retain such spellings as *oughly* (ugly) and *aſphodil* and not retain such as *beautifull;* for then the pupil may suppose he sees all the words spelled as Milton spelled them. So it has seemed better to modernize all words and to insert the following lines in the spelling of the first edition of *Comus* to show how Milton really spelled, or at least how his printer spelled. The old punctuation is also worth noting.

COMUS (lines 593-607)

But evill on it ſelfe ſhall backe recoyle
And mixe no more with goodneſſe, when at laſt
Gather'd like ſcum, and ſettl'd to it ſelfe
It ſhall bee in eternall reſtleſſe change
Selfe fed, and ſelfe conſum'd, if this faile
The pillar'd firmament is rottenneſſe,
And earth's baſe built on ſtubble. But come let's on
Againſt ta' oppoſing will and arme of heav'n
May never this juſt ſword be lifted up,
But for the damn'd magician, let him be girt
With all the greiſly legions that troope
Under the ſootie flag of Acheron,
Harpyies and Hydra's, or all the monſtrous bugs
'Twixt Africa, and Inde, Ile find him out
And force him to reſtore his purchaſe backe

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS

[TO THE TEACHER.

These questions are not intended to be exhaustive; nor is it supposed that all of them will be used by every teacher. They are simply intended as specimen questions that have been found useful in bringing out the pupil's understanding of the subject matter.]

MILTON'S LIFE AND WORKS

1. How did the fact that Milton's boyhood was spent in a great city affect his writings?
2. What was the financial condition of his parents and how did this affect his education?
3. What university did he attend and why?
4. For what was he noted while in college?
5. Into what periods does his life naturally divide itself? What *kind* of works in each period?
6. Name the works of each period, tell the *kind* each one is, explain the *title,* and tell the *subject* of each one.
7. Show that Milton had a real devotion for liberty.
8. Why wasn't Milton buried in Westminster Abbey?

L'ALLEGRO AND IL PENSEROSO

1. Explain fully the meaning of the titles.
2. What is the rhythm, meter, and rhyme-scheme of the first ten lines of each poem. Compare them with the rest of the poem.
3. Point out the similarities and contrasts in the two poems. Filling out the outline will bring out these comparisons. The following questions will help.
   a. With what word does each begin?
   b. What is said about Melancholy in the first ten lines of L'Allegro? About Joy in same lines of Il Penseroso?
   c. Who were parents of Mirth? Of Melancholy?
   d. How does Mirth come? How Melancholy?
   e. Who are the companions of Mirth? Of Melancholy?
   f. *When* does the Social Man's day begin? The Solitary Man's?
   g. What bird does the Social Man hear? The Solitary Man?
   h. What evening sound corresponds to the crowing of the cock?
   i. What evening sound corresponds to the hounds and horn?
   j. Where does the Social Man spend the evening? The Solitary Man?

k. What kind of plays does the Social Man enjoy?
l. What kind of music does he hear?

4. Compare the closing lines. Which does Milton seem to prefer, Mirth or Melancholy?
5. Tell the story of Philomel. Of Orpheus.
6. Explain
   (a) *"cynosure."*
   (b) "tale of Troy divine."
   (c) "him who left half-told
   The story of Cambuscan bold."
   (d) "Where more is meant than meets the ear."
   (e) "If Jonson's learned sock be on."
   (f) "linked sweetness long drawn out."
   (g) "Storied windows richly dight
   Casting a dim religious light."
   (h) "the drudging goblin."

LYCIDAS

1. Where did Milton get this title? To whom was the name *Lycidas* originally applied and why was it a fitting title for a poem on Edward King?
2. Make an outline of the poem similar to the one in the text and justify the outline by explaining the meaning of the lines corresponding to each division of the outline.
3. Why is fame called the "last infirmity of noble mind?"
4. What were the historical events which caused Milton's outburst against the Church of England?
5. Explain fully "Blind mouths."
6. Who is supposed to be speaking up to line 186? Who from there to the end?
7. Explain: "He touched the tender stops of various quills."

COMUS

1. What *kind* of a drama is *Comus?*
2. State six characteristics of the masque.
3. Point out illustrations of each of these characteristics in *Comus.*
4. What is the theme of *Comus?*
5. By whom is it first stated?
6. By whom is it most fully stated?
7. What is Comus's philosophy of life?
8. Tell the story of Comus's life. Of Sabrina's.
9. In whose name is Sabrina called upon?
10. How do the closing lines give unity to the poem?
11. *Comus* may be said to consist of three scenes. Locate each scene and tell what takes place in it.

I. Introduction. Dismissal of Melancholy (ll. 1-10).
   1. Parentage (1. ?
      (2. ?
   2. Birthplace (?
   Place of banishment (?

II. Invitation to Mirth (ll. 11-24).
   1. Parentage.
      a. (1. ?
         (2. ?
      b. (1. ?
         (2. ?

III. Companions of Mirth (ll. 24-40).
   1. Who they are (1, 2, 3, 4,
      (5, 6, 7, 8,
      (9, 10, 11.
   2. How Mirth comes (?

IV. Pleasures afforded by Mirth—An Ideal Round of Pleasures (ll. 41-150).
   1. Morning Pleasures (ll. 41-68).
      a. Sounds (1, 2, 3,
         (4, 5, 6.
      b. Sights (1.
         (2.
   2. Mid-day Pleasures (ll. 69-99).
      a. Sights (1. Landscape (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.
         (2. People working (1.
         (3. People playing (
         (
      b. Sounds (
   3. Evening Pleasures (ll. 100-150).
      a. Early evening, in country (ll. 100-116).
         1. Folk Tales (1.
            (2.
            (3.
      b. Later evening, in the city (ll. 117-150).
         1. Masques (1.
            (2.
         2. Comedies (1.
            (2.
         3. Concerts (
            (

V. Conclusion (ll. 151-152).
   1. L'Allegro's decision (
      (

I. Introduction. Dismissal of Joys (ll. 1-10).
   1. Parentage (
   2. Place of banishment (

II. Invitation to Melancholy (ll. 11-44).
   1. Appearance (
   2. Parentage (1.
                 (2.
   3. Manner of coming (

III. Companions of Melancholy (ll. 45-55).
   1. Who they are (1, 2, 3,
                   (4, 5, 6.

IV. Pleasures Afforded by Melancholy.—An Ideal Round of Pleasures (ll. 56-174).
   1. Early evening pleasures (ll. 56-76).
      a. Outdoors
         1. Sounds (1.
                   (2.
         2. Sight (
      b. Indoors
         1. Sounds (1.
                   (2.
         2. Sight (
   2. Later evening pleasures (ll. 77-120).
      a. Reading philosophy (1.
                            (2.
      b. Reading poetry
                      (1.
         1. Dramatic (2.
                      (3.
         2. Lyric (1.
                  (2.
         3. Narrative (1.
                      (2.
   3. Morning pleasures (ll. 121-154).
      a. Kind of morning (
      b. How the time is spent (
   4. Afternoon pleasures (ll. 155-166).
      a. Where time is spent (
      b. How spent (
   5. Pleasures of old age (ll. 167-174).

V. Conclusion (ll. 175-176).
   Il Penseroso's decision (
                          (

LYCIDAS.

OUTLINE

ll. 1-14. Introduction: Occasion for writing the poem.
Milton says that although he is as yet unprepared to write great poetry, still he must celebrate in verse his friend, King, who was himself a poet.

ll. 15-22. Invocation to the Muse.
He asks the goddess of poetry to assist him to do his best, so that some later poet may lament his, *i.e.*, Milton's death.

ll. 23-36. Early life of the friends.
Milton tells how he and King studied together and wrote poetry while at college.

ll. 37-49. The blighting effect of King's death.
The woods and caves mourn his absence; nature no longer rejoices in his presence.

ll. 50-63 The Nymphs are reproached for his death.
The water nymphs must have been absent when he was drowned, though even they would have tried in vain to save him.

ll. 64-84 First Digression: On Fame as the poet's reward.
He wonders if it is worth while to be temperate in order to win fame by writing poetry! Might it not be better to indulge oneself fully? But Apollo reminds him that true fame is the approval of Heaven.

ll. 85-112. Triton, Camus and St. Peter explain and lament.
First Triton comes and explains that the sea divinities are not to blame for King's death: it was the fault of the ship.
Then the River Cam, symbolizing Cambridge University, passes by lamenting the death of a brilliant student.
Lastly St. Peter, representing the Christian Church, comes, laments the loss of a promising, minister and bitterly denounces the corruption of the English church.

ll. 112-131 Second Digression, On the corruption in the church.
The church officials care only for their own advancement and pleasure, and neglect their people, who suffer from lack of teaching within the church and attacks of enemies without.

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ll. 132-164. Flowers for Lycidas's tomb.

The fields are bidden to bring all their flowers to deck Lycidas's tomb, though really his body is beneath the sea.

ll. 165-185. Lycidas's happiness in Heaven.

Though his body sank beneath the water, still his soul is in Paradise and he has become a sort of guardian spirit.

ll. 186-193. Conclusion.

The poet changes the mental point of view, and speaks of himself in the third person. He has expressed various feelings in his poem and is now about to turn to other subjects.

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